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James Walker
June 19, 1875

MEMOIRS

OF

THE LIFE

OF

THE REV. RICHARD PRICE,

D.D. F.R.S.

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THE REV. RICHARD PRICE,

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BY

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PREFACE.

In writing the following Memoirs my chief design has been to give such a general account of Dr. Price as should lead the reader to form a right judgement of his principles and character.—I have, therefore, confined myself to the more important parts of his life, without entering into minute details of little consequence, which at this distant period could have no effect in rendering the work either more useful or interesting:—and in order to be as concise as possible, I have been very sparing in the use of his private correspondence;—nor

should I indeed, under any circumstances, have thought myself justified in gratifying an idle curiosity by the indiscriminate publication of letters which had been written in the confidence of private friendship.

It may possibly appear strange that so many years should have been suffered to pass away before any of the nearest friends or relatives of Dr. Price should have paid the tribute due to his memory of giving some account of his life.—This arose in the first instance from the premature death of my brother George Morgan, who had undertaken to write a very circumstantial history of his uncle's life, and had made a considerable progress in it, when, towards the close of the year 1798, a fatal disorder put a final period to this and all his other pursuits.

The confused state in which his papers were found, and the indistinct short hand in which they were written, rendered it impossible either to arrange or to understand them properly; and therefore, after many fruitless attempts, I was reluctantly obliged to give up the investigation, and to take upon myself the task of writing a new, but more concise account; being aware that many facts which would have been highly gratifying to Dr. Price's *immediate* friends would now find but few survivors to be interested in them.

My intimate connexion with Dr. Price has enabled me to give almost the whole of the facts in these Memoirs during the last twenty-two years of his life, from my own personal knowledge—and these are certainly the most important. Previous

to that period, the few occurrences which distinguished his earlier years, I have either accidentally learned in conversation with him, or derived from those notes which he had prepared for the purpose of writing his own life. Having engaged in this work from no motive of self-interest or ambition, I have been anxious only to render justice to the memory of a friend, by bearing my testimony to those virtues and talents which he so often displayed in the service of mankind, and on which I can never reflect without the deepest gratitude and veneration.

London,
June 22d, 1815.

MEMOIRS

OF

THE LIFE

OF

RICHARD PRICE, D. D.

THOUGH many years have elapsed since the death of Dr. Price, and the greater part of those friends, who would have been most interested in the account of his life, have followed him to the grave; I am not without hope that a few of them still remain who will be gratified by recollecting, and perhaps by being made better acquainted with, the habits and pursuits of one whom they had formerly known, and whose character they were accustomed to admire. Nor can the account of a life uni-

formly employed in promoting the best interests of mankind be unprofitable to any person, however little he may have previously known of it, or however distant he may have lived from the period in which it terminated. The exploits of heroes and conquerors are perhaps better fitted to excite the astonishment and applause of the world than the tranquil and retired occupations of the philosopher or the divine; but the former have in general little in them to soothe or to gratify the best feelings of man, or to compensate for the painful emotions arising from the recital of the miseries and devastations with which they are signalized; while the latter, though destitute of the splendour which dazzles and deceives the multitude, have a tendency to dignify and exalt the human character, and to excite us to glory,—not by indulging the destructive ambition of triumphing over our fellow-creatures, but by exerting far nobler efforts to control our passions and to triumph

over ourselves. The following account therefore is given to the reader as the life of a man who sacrificed no principle to popular applause or private emolument, but who always endeavoured in silence and tranquillity to exemplify in his conduct those amiable qualities and the truth of those religious principles which he enforced in his writings; and its end will be fully attained, if in the least degree it inspires those sentiments of liberty and virtue which he so ardently inculcated, and which render his memory so dear to the friends that have survived him.

RICHARD PRICE, the son by a second marriage of Rice Price, was born on the 23d of February 1723, at Tynton, in the parish of Langeinor, in the county of Glamorgan. His father for many years was the minister of a congregation of protestant dissenters at Bridgend in the same county, which was originally formed by Mr. Thomas, one of

those clergymen who had been ejected from their livings at the restoration of Charles the Second. Of his earlier years I have very little to relate that is either important or interesting. Till the age of eight or ten years, he was educated partly at home, by a person retained in his father's house for that purpose, and partly by a person in the neighbourhood, of the name of Peters, who afterwards exchanged the profession of a country schoolmaster for that of a dissenting minister, and who was much esteemed by his pupil during the whole course of his life. Mr. Price, by his first marriage having two other sons, intended Richard, his youngest son, for trade; nor is it certain that he would have been diverted from this intention, had he lived long enough to carry it into execution. But, whatever his intentions were, he does not appear to have neglected his son's education.—Having taken him from the care of Mr. Peters, he placed him in a small school at Bridgend, from which he was soon

moved, on account of the moroseness and ill temper of his master, to another of a different description at Neath, which was kept by the Rev. Mr. Simmons, the minister of the dissenting congregation in that town. After continuing here about two years, he was sent to the village of Pentwyn in Carmarthenshire, for his further instruction under the Rev. Samuel Jones, a truly catholic and worthy man, whose religious principles he was always used to admire for their candour and liberality. What his father's motives were for moving him from this place—whether it was that Mr. Jones's sentiments in religion were too liberal, or that the youth might be more cheaply instructed elsewhere—I know not; but at the age of fifteen (when he had been at Pentwyn about three years) he was moved to the Rev. Vavasor Griffith's academy at Talgarth in Breconshire; where he was a student at the death of his father, in 1739. This event by no means improved either his present

condition or future prospects.—From his earliest youth his religious principles were very different from those of his father. The opinions of the one were candid, liberal, and benevolent; those of the other were narrow, selfish, and gloomy; and the effects of those opinions on the temper of both were, as might be expected, in direct opposition to each other. So bigoted was his father to his own creed, that one day finding the boy reading Dr. Clarke's Sermons, he flung the book in a rage into the fire, with the most bitter invectives against him for his want of faith and orthodoxy. As the God in whom Mr. Price believed was supposed to have formed the greater part of mankind for damnation, and to have reserved only a few of his favourites without any particular regard to their temper or conduct,—in like manner did this good man single out one of his children for his favourite, leaving him almost the whole of his property, and abandoning the rest of

his family in a great measure to provide for themselves. The aristocratic principle of making one rich man in the family may possibly have united with his religious principles in disposing Mr. Price to make this partial distribution of his property. But without entering into the further discussion of his motives, I shall only observe, that his widow and other six children were in consequence involved in much difficulty and trouble. The eldest son, however, who practised physick at Newport in Monmouthshire, survived the disappointment but a short time. The widow, the mother of Richard (a most generous and excellent woman), quitted Tynton on the death of her husband, and, after languishing a few months at her temporary abode in Bridgend, died of a nervous fever in the beginning of May in the following year. Her son, together with his two sisters, who had moved with her to Bridgend, attended her in her last moments; and he has often expressed

his admiration of the tranquillity and joy with which she viewed the approaches of death, and the prospect of a better world.

During the short interval which passed between the decease of his father and that of his mother, he continued at the academy at Talgarth; to which place he walked over the mountains of Brecon, in the severe frost of that year (1740); and it was in his way thither that his mind was first engaged in studying Butler's Analogy—a work which never ceased to be the subject of his praise and admiration.

In the autumn which succeeded his mother's death, having now attained his 18th year, it was determined, in compliance with his own wishes, and the advice of his paternal uncle, the Rev. Samuel Price, who officiated as co-pastor with Dr. Watts, that he should be moved to a dissenting academy in London.—Having no means of conveyance, as he then lived with his two sisters who were no better provided for

than himself, he had recourse to his brother, the heir of his father's fortune, who supplied him with a horse to carry himself and a servant as far as Cardiff, a distance of twenty miles, from whence he was left to trudge on foot with his bundle in his hand to Bristol—a further distance of forty miles. But luckily for him, a good-natured lady, seeing a youth in this forlorn condition walking over rough and dirty roads, took him into her carriage a part of the way, and so far relieved him of his fatigue and sorrow. From Bristol he set off in a conveyance, which to the best of my recollection he told me was no other than a broad-wheeled waggon. Immediately on his arrival in London he was admitted into the academy founded by Mr. Coward, of which Mr. Eames was the principal tutor, and lodged by his uncle (at whose expense he was chiefly maintained) in the house of a barber, in Pudding-lane. In this close and confined abode, which was rendered

more noxious by the want of those ordinary conveniences which are necessary to health and cleanliness, he pursued his studies with the most unremitting zeal and delight.—But he soon felt the effects of having exchanged the pure atmosphere of Wales for the putrescent vapours of a narrow lane in London. In a few months he became afflicted with the jaundice, and was obliged to have recourse to the air of his native country for the recovery of his health. A summer's residence, however, among his relatives dispelled all his complaints, and he was enabled in the following winter to return to London, in order to resume his studies. Being now better accommodated, his health felt no further interruption; so that, during the remaining two years of his attendance at the academy, he devoted his whole time with *ardour and delight* (as he expresses himself in some of his private memoirs) to the study of mathematics, philosophy, and theology.—

When he had completed his education at the academy, under the instruction of the venerable Mr. Eames, of whose ability and virtue he always, and deservedly, spoke with the greatest respect and esteem, he was moved by the recommendation of his uncle to Stoke Newington, where he resided for near thirteen years, in the family of Mr. Streatfield, as his chaplain and companion. While he resided here, he occasionally officiated in different congregations, particularly at Dr. Chandler's meeting-house in the Old Jewry. Here he seemed to acquire considerable popularity; but Dr. Chandler, for reasons best known to himself, advised him to be less energetic in his manner, and to deliver his discourses with more diffidence and modesty. This rebuke had its natural effect on the mild and unassuming temper of Mr. Price. To avoid an extreme into which he was in no danger of falling, he ran into the opposite extreme of a cold and lifeless delivery, which, by ren-

dering him less popular with the congregation, disposed them to feel less regret when their minister had no further occasion for his services. During the latter years of his residence at Mr. Streatfield's he officiated principally at Edmonton, till he was chosen to be the morning preacher at Newington Green. By the death of Mr. Streatfield, and also of his uncle which happened in the year 1756, his circumstances were considerably improved; the former having bequeathed him a legacy in money, and the latter a house in Leadenhall-street, together with some other property. But though he was thus remembered by his uncle, he certainly had reason to expect that it would have been done more liberally.—But it is not improbable that those motives which influenced his father might have had some effect on the mind of his uncle, in the disposal of his fortune; for the greater part of it in both cases was left to the same person; and, it must be confessed, with proper

discernment, if they intended that it should be duly preserved and improved. But it should be observed that Mr. Price never expressed the slightest disappointment.—On the contrary, he always spoke of his uncle with respect and gratitude, which, I believe, he very justly deserved. Being, however, a rigid Calvinist and tainted with the religious bigotry of that sect, it is not improbable that his nephew, who dared to think for himself, and to think differently from his uncle, might have incurred some displeasure on account of his opinions, notwithstanding the excellence of his moral conduct. In their conversation one day on controversial subjects, being asked whether he believed in the *proper divinity* of Jesus Christ, he very ingenuously answered in the negative, if by *proper divinity* was meant the equality of Jesus Christ with God. On which his uncle with some vehemence exclaimed "that he had rather see him transformed into a pig, than that he

should have been brought up to be a dissenting minister without believing in the Trinity." The horror expressed in this exclamation of the uncle will perhaps serve in some measure to account for the sparing manner in which he doled out a part of his fortune to the nephew who was the object of it.

The addition however of this and other property to the little which he inherited on the death of his mother, and the income arising from the congregation at Newington Green, determined Mr. Price to exchange his condition in life; and accordingly in June 1757 he was married to Miss Sarah Blundell, originally of Belgrave in Leicestershire, the daughter of one of those unfortunate speculators who were ruined by the South Sea bubble in the year 1720. Miss Blundell, after living with her mother for some years in a private lodging in London, had on her decease lately moved to Hackney, to live on

the remains of that fortune which had been dissipated as far as her father had the power over it. In this place Mr. Price became acquainted with her, and formed a connexion which was to constitute a great part of the happiness of his future life. Having resided here during the first year after his marriage, he moved to Newington Green in the year 1758, in order to be near his congregation, and in that retired situation to pursue his studies with more tranquillity than he could have done in a narrow street and noisy thoroughfare at Hackney. It was, however, during his residence in this latter place that he published his treatise on the foundation of morals —a work, which was the fruit of his studies from his earliest years, and which first introduced him to an acquaintance with the late excellent Dr. Adams; and as this acquaintance arose, not only from the similarity of their sentiments on this, but on many other important points in morals and

religion, it produced a friendship between them which terminated only with their lives. The modesty, candor, and benevolence displayed in this work, conciliated the minds even of those who differed most widely in their sentiments from the author. In this number Mr. Hume should be particularly mentioned, who, admiring the liberal manner in which his doctrines had been controverted, conceived so favourable an opinion of the writer, that it gave rise to an acquaintance, which was continued on both sides with uninterrupted esteem and friendship. Mr. Hume had been so little accustomed to civility from his theological adversaries, that his admiration was naturally excited by the least appearance of it in any of their publications. Dr. Douglas (the late bishop of Salisbury), Dr. Adams, and Mr. Price, were splendid exceptions to this rudeness and bigotry. Having been opposed by these divines with the candor and respect which were due to his abilities,

and which it is shameful should ever be wanting in any controversy, he was desirous of meeting them all together, in order to spend a few hours in familiar conversation with them.—Accordingly, they all dined by invitation at Mr. Cadell's in the Strand; and, as might be expected, passed their time in the utmost harmony and good humour. In a subsequent interview with Mr. Price, when Mr. Hume visited him at his house at Newington Green, he candidly acknowledged that on one point Mr. Price had succeeded in convincing him that his arguments were inconclusive; but it does not appear that Mr. Hume, in consequence of this conviction, made any alteration in the subsequent edition of his Essays. The treatise on morals, though it raised the reputation of the author both at home and abroad *, procured comparative-

* On this occasion he received the following letter from his friend Dr. Franklin:—

"REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,

"Supposing that the foreign literary journals do not fall

ly but few readers.—An abstruse metaphysical disquisition is not very inviting in general, and therefore it is perhaps less surprising that 28 years should have elapsed before two editions of the work should be disposed of. In the year 1785 a third edition was published, containing many corrections and additions, together with some remarks on Mr. Paley's Lectures on moral

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" in your way, I send you the following account of your " late work, as given in the *Bibliothèque des Sciences et " des Beaux Arts* for January, February, and March, 1767. " After reciting the title, the authors say, ' On devoit déjà " ' à Mr. Price un excellent Traité sur les principales " ' questions de la Morale. L'Ouvrage dont on vient de " ' voir le Titre mettra le sceau à la réputation de l'Au- " ' teur, et ne manquera sans doute pas d'être traduit en " ' diverses langues. On y trouve tout ce qu'une médita- " ' tion profonde, une parfaite connoissance de la religion, " ' un esprit vraiment philosophique, une piété tendre et " ' éclairée peuvent dicter de meilleur sur les sujets " ' annoncés.'

" With sincere esteem I am, dear sir, yours, &c.

" B. FRANKLIN.

" *Craven Street, October* 22, 1767."

philosophy, &c., and a dissertation on the Being and Attributes of the Deity.—This work, so enlarged and corrected, the author considered as conveying his maturest thoughts on one of the most important subjects that can exercise the human mind. It would be improper, were I even so disposed, to enter here into an analysis of this excellent treatise. I shall only observe, that the author with his accustomed modesty was used to express himself greatly indebted in the composition of it to Hutcheson, Balguy, Clark, Butler, and Hume; but particularly to the latter, whose doubts and objections led him to examine the ground on which he stood, before he ventured to raise his own structure upon it.

During the first years of his residence at Newington Green, Mr. Price devoted himself almost wholly to the composition of sermons; and so impressed was he with the necessity and importance of giving up his time entirely to works of this kind, that

in some private memoirs which he has left of himself, he laments as a trifling waste of time the few hours which he spent in the study of mathematics and philosophy, and even in the harmless relaxation of visiting his friends. Excepting Dr. Franklin, Mr. Canton, and two or three other philosophical friends, his acquaintance at this period was chiefly confined to the members of his own congregation. Being naturally of weak spirits, this dull uniformity of the same scenes and pursuits was ill calculated either to cheer his mind or to improve his health. In the beginning of the year 1762 his wife was attacked by a disorder, under which she laboured with little or no intermission for more than twenty years, and of which she never perfectly recovered. In addition to this, he was himself afflicted with a bodily complaint which, though concealed from his friends, depressed his spirits, and often excited in him the most painful apprehensions of its consequences. Under

these circumstances of sorrow and distress it is no wonder that a mind, disposed from its earliest years to piety and devotion, should be more than ordinarily impressed with the importance of religion, and regard the pursuit of all subjects unconnected with it as vain and trifling. His private afflictions, however, were confined to the precincts of his own breast, and did not prevent him from maintaining in company his usual cheerfulness, and securing to himself the esteem and affection of all who conversed with him.

The congregation to which he preached, though highly respectable, was very small; and therefore, instead of officiating to them twice a day, he was induced, from the hope of being more extensively useful, to accept an invitation in December 1762 to succeed Dr. Benson as evening preacher in Poor Jewry Lane. But the experience of a few months convinced him that his sphere of usefulness was not likely to be much

extended by this change. His hearers were equally thin in both places; which so discouraged him, that he had determined to give up preaching altogether, from an idea that his talents were totally unfit for the office of a public speaker.—Nor was it merely the thinness of his auditory that had the unhappy effect of discouraging him in the discharge of his duties; he was mortified also by their inattention so much as to be led, by a modesty peculiar to himself, to attribute that want of success which arose from the listless apathy of those whom he addressed, to his own weakness and incapacity *.

* He particularly mentions, in one of his private notes, that having preached in the afternoon on the *future judgement* with all the force and energy in his power, he had the mortification to find that neither his delivery nor the importance of the subject could keep a great part of his hearers from sleeping!—Had he recollected the hour of the day in which he addressed them, he would have been at no loss to discover the true cause of their lethargy.

Regarding himself as incapable of giving effect to his moral instructions by delivering them from the pulpit, he consoled himself with the hope of rendering them useful to the world by conveying them in another manner. With this view he formed the sermons which he had preached on *private prayer* into a dissertation on that subject, and in the year 1767 published it with three other dissertations, on Providence—on the Junction of Virtuous Men in the heavenly State—and on Historical Evidence and Miracles.—This work had engaged his attention and occupied his time at intervals for more than seven years; and it was not without great diffidence and hesitation, that he was at last induced to publish it.—The Dissertation on Miracles had been written as early as the year 1760, and read to Mr. Canton, Mr. Rose, and some other friends, who all concurred in recommending the publication of it.—In this dissertation, which was intended as an answer

to Mr. Hume's arguments against the credibility of miracles, Mr. Price had, as he thought, expressed himself improperly, by speaking of the *poor sophistry* of those arguments, and using other language of the same kind.—When he sent a copy of his book to Mr. Hume, who was then one of the under-secretaries of state, he made an apology to him, and promised that nothing of the kind should appear in another edition. He received in consequence a very flattering letter from Mr. Hume, which he regarded more as a matter of civility, than as a proof of its having wrought any change in the sentiments of that philosopher. When the work, however, appeared in a second edition he fulfilled his promise, and sent him a correct copy; for which he immediately received an acknowledgement, expressive of Mr. Hume's *wonder at such scrupulosity in one of Mr. Price's profession.*

On the death of his friend Mr. Bayes of Tunbridge Wells in the year 1761, he was re-

quested by the relatives of that truly ingenious man, to examine the papers which he had written on different subjects, and which his own modesty would never suffer him to make public. Among these Mr. Price found an imperfect solution of one of the most difficult problems in the doctrine of chances, for "determining from the numbers of times in which an unknown event has happened and failed, the chance that the probability of its happening in a single trial lies somewhere between any two degrees of probability that can be named." The important purposes to which this problem might be applied, induced him to undertake the task of completing Mr. Bayes's solution; but at this period of his life, conceiving his duty to require that he should be very sparing of the time which he allotted to any other studies than those immediately connected with his profession as a dissenting minister, he proceeded very slowly with the investigation, and did not finish it

till after two years; when it was presented by Mr. Canton to the Royal Society, and published in their Transactions in 1763.—Having sent a copy of his paper to Dr. Franklin, who was then in America, he had the satisfaction of witnessing its insertion the following year in the American Philosophical Transactions.—But notwithstanding the pains he had taken with the solution of this problem, Mr. Price still found reason to be dissatisfied with it, and in consequence added a supplement to his former paper; which being in like manner presented by Mr. Canton to the Royal Society, was published in the Philosophical Transactions in the year 1764. In a note to his Dissertation on Miracles, he has availed himself of this problem to confute an argument of Mr. Hume against the evidence of testimony when compared with the regard due to experience; and it is certain that it might be applied to other subjects no less interesting and important. By these two

communications to the Royal Society, Mr. Price had proved himself not unworthy the honour of being admitted a member of that learned body, and he was accordingly elected in a few months after the publication of his second paper. This he regarded as a desirable event on many accounts, but particularly as it might be the means of introducing him more into company; which in the present state of his spirits was highly necessary to his health. Indeed, the continued illness of Mrs. Price, rendered still more afflicting by his own malady and the natural feebleness of his constitution, seems to have made him indifferent to almost every other event. When Mr. Neale and Mr. Furneaux applied to him to become one of the tutors in Coward's Academy, in November 1762; and also when the congregation in Lewin's Mead, Bristol, in the following year wished to choose him as their minister to succeed Mr. Richards, he declined both these offers, principally on the ground of its being

impossible for him to think of changing his situation while his wife laboured under her present disorder. The dejection of mind produced by this circumstance led him to form a very unfavourable and unjust estimate of his own abilities. He thought himself qualified neither for the office of a tutor nor for that of a preacher, and often wished to retire from the world, in order, as he could not improve others, that he might at least improve himself. But although grieved and dispirited, he never uttered a murmur of discontent. His steadfast faith in an over-ruling Providence directing all events ultimately for our good, disposed him in all circumstances to be thankful for the comforts he enjoyed, and never suffered him a moment to repine at those which were withheld from him. In time, however, he became more familiarized to those scenes which at first had so deeply depressed his spirits; and though always affected by them, he so far recovered himself as to divide his

hours more equally between the study of philosophical and religious subjects, and to view the result of his labours in both through a less gloomy and discouraging medium.—Still, however, the dread of misspending his time continued on some occasions to awaken his fears, particularly when engaged on speculative subjects.—Having bestowed considerable pains on the solution of a problem proposed to him by Mr. Canton respecting the effect of the compression of water by its own weight in a column two miles deep, he appears in some of his private notes to soothe his apprehension, with a hope that he had at least been *innocently* employed when engaged in this investigation.

Nearly about this time a proposal was made to him by the booksellers to publish a complete edition of all Sir Isaac Newton's works. But his diffidence of his own abilities, his want of spirits to engage in so arduous an undertaking, and possibly

his former prejudices against devoting too much of his time and attention to subjects not immediately connected with his profession, determined him to decline a work, which has been since executed by a person who laboured under none of these difficulties.

Though Mr. Price had hitherto confined himself principally to metaphysical and religious subjects, and the reputation he had acquired by his writings was highly honourable to him by the great addition they made to the number of his friends and admirers, yet his popularity as a preacher was but little increased by them. In Newington Green and Poor Jewry Lane, his congregations were gradually dwindling away (for the ravages of death were repaired by no accession of new members); and so much was he discouraged by this circumstance, that I have often heard him say, that his attendants were now so few as to make it impossible for him to be animated before

such an assembly; nay, that he thought every attempt at exertion or energy would be completely ridiculous. But it should be observed to the honour of those who did attend him, that their esteem and affection made all possible amends to him for the smallness of their number, and for the disappointment arising from the contracted sphere of his usefulness.

His dissertations on Providence and the Junction of Virtuous Men in a Future State gave rise to an acquaintance of very particular importance in the life of Mr. Price.—The late Marquis of Lansdowne (then Earl of Shelburne) having just been deprived of his wife, and feeling himself deeply afflicted by the loss of that amiable and excellent lady, naturally became susceptible of religious impressions in that season of sorrow, and disposed to receive those consolations which are derived from the hope of a better state. By the recommendation of Mrs. Montague (who had for some years been

intimately acquainted with Mr. Price) Lord Shelburne was induced to read the two dissertations above mentioned, and was so highly gratified by the perusal of them, that he immediately expressed a wish to Mrs. Montague to be introduced to the author. A day was accordingly appointed for this purpose at Mr. Price's house at Newington Green, where his lordship punctually attended; and after spending an hour or two in conversation, he was so well pleased with the unaffected simplicity of his new acquaintance, that he soon repeated his visit, and contracted a friendship for him which knew no interruption to the day of his death.—Of this friendly connexion I shall have other occasions to speak in the course of this history; but it will be proper here to observe, that it began in the year 1769, and continued for some time before Mr. Price had ever written on political subjects; though it is not improbable that it may have been more firmly esta-

blished afterwards in consequence of those publications.

Not long after Lord Shelburne's visit to Newington Green, Mr. Price was honoured with an unexpected one from Lord Lyttelton, and I believe also by the intervention of Mrs. Montague. The sentiments and character of this nobleman will easily explain the nature of his visit. Nay so purely religious do his motives appear to have been, that when Mr. Price at a subsequent interview mentioned his intention to him of publishing his "Appeal to the Public on the National Debt," he earnestly dissuaded him from it—no doubt for reasons similar to those which led Mr. Price in the more gloomy period of his life to consider his profession as excluding him from taking any part in the temporal affairs of this world.—The publication, however, of this pamphlet did not interrupt their acquaintance; nor do I believe on the other hand that it increased their intimacy.

It should be observed, that although Mr. Price had hitherto been so scrupulous in regard to the hours which he thought it his duty to devote to religious studies, and had never considered his time to have been properly employed when engaged in any other pursuits; yet in no period of his life was his mind so far alienated from the temporal concerns of the world, as to render him indifferent to the liberties of mankind, or to his own rights as a man and a member of society.—Having been brought up from his earliest youth in the principles of dissent from the established church, and having been confirmed in those principles by the reflection of maturer years, he naturally felt the injustice of those laws which deprived him of those rights on account of his religious opinions. He lived indeed to witness the repeal, or at least the modification, of some of them; but the *Test-Act*, the most exceptionable of all those laws, was suffered to remain, and, I am sorry to

add, is still suffered to remain, a reproach to every principle of sound policy and religion.—Exclusive of the injustice of this law, Mr. Price considered it to be a profanation of a sacred ordinance; and he has often declared that on this ground, if he had been a member of the established church, no consideration should ever have prevailed upon him to submit to it as a qualification for a civil office. But his objections as a dissenter were of a different kind. He regarded it as an encroachment on his civil liberty, and consequently as a grievance which ought never to be borne without exerting every peaceable effort to be relieved from it. The base compromise into which the dissenting ministers entered with Sir Robert Walpole in the preceding reign, when they bartered the liberties of their brethren for a pension, he always reprobated in the severest terms. This pension, represented by that great father of corruption as the royal bounty of the sove-

reign, proceeding from his regard to his beloved subjects the dissenters, but in reality bestowed upon them from no other motive than to induce them to desist from their application to parliament for the repeal of the Test-Act, has been continued ever since with little variation*, and exists a perpetual monument of their disgrace. So deeply impressed was Mr. Price with this sentiment, that being once applied to for his vote by the late Sir Edmund Thomas, when canvassing for the county of Glamorgan, and being offered that worthy baronet's interest to procure him the disposal of this money among his brethren, he immediately replied, that the best service Sir Edmund could render to him or his brethren would be, to advise the king's ministers to discontinue a donation which could only be

* Sometimes the minister has burthened it with a *rider*, when from motives equally honourable he has wished privately to requite the services of an adherent, or when his other lists are too full to admit of an additional pensioner.

regarded by every independent dissenter as the price of his liberty.

Having now officiated near fourteen years at Newington Green with the hopeless prospect of ever becoming extensively useful in that situation, he was the more easily induced to accept an invitation to succeed Mr. Law as morning preacher at the Gravel-Pit meeting-house in Hackney.—But being still unwilling that his connexion with his old friends at Newington Green should be entirely broken off, he consented to remain with them as afternoon preacher, and in consequence resigned that service at Poor Jewry Lane. By this change one great cause of his despondency was removed; for his audience at Hackney was much more numerous than in either of the places at which he had hitherto officiated. During the first four or five years of his ministry, however, it increased very slowly; and it is probable that neither the excellence of his discourses, nor the impressive manner

in which they were delivered, would have made any great addition to his hearers, had not other causes of a very different nature concurred to render him popular.

To the period nearly in which he was chosen minister to the congregation at Hackney, Mr. Price appears from the preceding account to have confined his studies almost exclusively to moral and religious subjects; but the different communications which he made to the Royal Society about this time seem to show that he was becoming less scrupulous in this respect, and disposed to consider philosophical inquiries not altogether inconsistent with the profession of a dissenting minister. In 1769 he wrote some observations, addressed in a letter to Dr. Franklin, on the expectations of lives—the increase of mankind—and the population of London—which were published in the Philosophical Transactions of that year. In May 1770 he communicated to the Royal Society some observa-

tions on the proper method of calculating the values of contingent reversions, and in the following December he addressed another letter to Dr. Franklin on the effect of the aberration of light on the time of a transit of Venus over the sun; both of which papers were also published in the Philosophical Transactions of that year. In the first of these papers he corrected an error into which M. De Moivre had fallen; and it may not be improper to mention a remarkable circumstance which attended the composition of it. From the high opinion he entertained of the accuracy of De Moivre, he conceived the error to be his own rather than that of so eminent a mathematician, and in consequence puzzled himself so much in the correction of it, that the colour of his hair, which was naturally black, became changed in different parts of his head into spots of perfect white. All this must have arisen from his usual diffidence in his own abilities; for no other

cause can be assigned for his doubts and difficulties in a case which really admitted of none.

About two or three years prior to the publication of this paper Mr. Price had been referred to, by some gentleman in the profession of the law, for his opinion of a plan by which they proposed to form themselves into a Society for providing Annuities for their widows. This he found upon examination to be so defective, and he represented its insufficiency so strongly to them, that they determined to lay it wholly aside.—At the same time a great number of other societies were formed with the same view, and founded upon principles equally defective and ruinous. Conceiving that the public were greatly misled by these societies, and that infinite mischief would ultimately ensue if they were not speedily checked, he was led to regard the subject in so serious a light, that he thought it his duty to devote a principal part of his time and atten-

tion to the consideration of it. Accordingly, in the year 1769 his Treatise on Reversionary Payments, &c., was published, containing, among a variety of other matters, the solutions of many questions in the Doctrine of Annuities—Schemes for establishing Societies for the benefit of age and widows on just principles—and an exposure of the inadequacy of the Societies of this kind which had been lately formed, and which were continually forming in London and other parts of the kingdom. The alarm and opposition excited by this work may be easily imagined. The more wise and prudent either reformed their plans, or dissolved their Societies altogether. —The more ignorant and obstinate persevered in their errors till they had fulfilled the author's predictions, and involved themselves in distress and ruin. By publishing a work of this kind, which immediately affects the temporal interests of mankind, Mr. Price had soon reason to conclude that

the way to be generally known lies not in the direction of morals and metaphysics. The reputation, however, which he had now acquired, and the great addition which it had made to the number of his acquaintance, had no other effect on the natural humility of his mind than to cheer him with the hope that it might be the means of rendering his labours more useful to the world.—I know not whether I should mention as one effect of it, the diploma which he received towards the latter end of the year 1769 from the University of Glasgow, granting him the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity, and conferred upon him, certainly without his own solicitation, and I believe even without his previous knowledge*.

* It ought, however, to be observed that this degree was conferred neither spontaneously nor gratuitously by the University. The application originated with some of his clerical friends in London, and the usual fees were paid by them unknown to Mr. Price, who always remain-

In the Treatise on Reversionary Payments (of which a second edition was published in 1772) Dr. Price had given an Essay on Public Credit and the National Debt, reprehending the imprudent manner in which that debt had been contracted, and more particularly the amount to which it had been suffered to accumulate in consequence of the alienation of the Sinking Fund. Towards the end of the same year he published a more formal work on this subject, under the title of an "Appeal to the public on the National Debt," giving an account of the Management of the Sinking Fund from its first establishment in 1716 by Sir Robert Walpole to its total extinction in 1733, and representing the danger to which the kingdom was exposed by thus borrowing for ever without providing any means for the redemption of the

ed ignorant of the manner in which the degree was obtained, and to which side of the Tweed he was originally indebted for it.

debt. It would be improper here to enter into an analysis of that publication. It will be sufficient to observe that it made no pretension to any new discoveries, in representing the effects of compound interest, and therefore that it insisted chiefly on the necessity of restoring what had been so wisely established and so imprudently abandoned:—and in order to excite Parliament to resume this salutary measure, it gave the actual amount of the debt at that time compared with what it might have been, had not the operations of the fund been destroyed by the temporizing policy of its founder and of those who succeeded him in the administration of the public finances. This pamphlet, though written from the best motives and founded on the plainest and most incontrovertible principles, roused a host of opponents against the author, who abused his scheme as visionary, impracticable, and seditious. But they have long been consigned to oblivion,

and it is not my wish to disturb their repose.

The scheme which they abused with so much folly and ignorance has since been adopted by Parliament, and now forms one of the chief bulwarks of our public credit. It is but justice, however, to Lord North to observe, that though unfriendly to his administration, he spoke in the House of Commons with great respect of some parts of this pamphlet, and so far proved himself to be possessed of more candour than one of his successors, who could profit by the private advice and assistance of the author, in establishing a new and better method of redeeming the national debt, (by consigning, among other provisions, the management of it to commissioners appointed by Parliament,) and afterwards could assume to himself the whole merit of the measure, without the slightest allusion to the source from which he derived his instruction.

The magnitude of the debt, though at that time it did not much exceed 140 millions, Dr. Price considered as an evil which threatened the nation with the most serious consequences. A peace of ten years had done but little to relieve the people from the burthens which pressed so heavily upon them, and depopulation, according to his opinion, was making rapid advances to render them less able to support those burthens; so that, in the event of another war, he foreboded nothing but bankruptcy and desolation. Impressed with these ideas, his views of public affairs at this time were particularly gloomy and desponding; and therefore, in recommending the measures which he thought most likely to save the nation from ruin, he acted more from a sense of duty and the benevolence of his own mind than from any confident hope of success.—But if the view of public affairs afforded him but little consolation, there was no period on the other hand in

which he enjoyed greater tranquillity and happiness in private life. The complaints, which in former years so much affected his body and mind, had by moderate exercise on horseback—by the regular use of the cold bath—and by the temperate manner in which he lived, gradually disappeared. Mrs. Price's illness also, though it still continued, had its intervals of relief; and long habit, which naturally takes off the edge of our afflictions and reconciles us to them, had in some measure this effect on Dr. Price, but without lessening his sympathy or attention to one whom he justly considered as having every claim to his affection and esteem. His hours at this period were agreeably divided between his studies and his friends. As he lived in a retired situation, his morning pursuits were seldom interrupted; and his afternoons were no less profitably spent in the society of those who loved and admired him, as well for the amiableness of his disposition as for the

humility with which he always imparted his knowledge to those who conversed with him. Some of his evenings in each week he devoted to particular parties; among these was one which consisted of Mrs. Montague, Mrs. Chapone, the Rev. Mr. Burrows, Mr. Mulso, and several other persons of distinguished abilities, who met at each other's houses, and whose conversation was chiefly confined to modern literature. But the party in which he always expressed himself most agreeably entertained, and which then met at stated times I believe at a coffee-house in St. Paul's Church-yard, but whose meetings were afterwards moved to the London Coffee-house Ludgate-hill, consisted of Dr. Franklin, Mr. Canton, Dr. Kippis, and other philosophical gentlemen. In this society the conversation extended to subjects more congenial with Dr. Price's feelings and pursuits, and therefore it is the less to be wondered that it should have excited his preference. To the number of

those who constituted this assembly should be added the illustrious name of Dr. Priestley, who had lately, by the recommendation of his friend Dr. Price, accepted the office of librarian to Lord Shelburne, and in consequence had his winter residence in London. The astonishing discoveries made by this admirable philosopher, which formed the foundation of all modern chemistry, and which he was now pursuing with his usual ardor and ability, added much to the entertainment and instruction of the company. But unfortunately the rising disputes with the American colonies gradually introduced other subjects into discussion, and at length deprived the society of one of its brightest ornaments, by obliging Dr. Franklin to retire from this country *.

* In his correspondence with Dr. Price, while he was at Paris, Dr. Franklin generally mentioned the Club at the London Coffee-house with the greatest regard and esteem, and at the same time never failed to express his regret at not having it in his power to attend the meetings of its virtuous and enlightened members.

In the political contentions which agitated the kingdom from the commencement of the present reign, Dr. Price had hitherto taken no active part. As a friend to liberty, he always felt himself warmly interested in its support, and freely expressed his abhorrence of every attempt to encroach upon it. But in all he had written on the subject of the public finances, he had confined his censures to the enormous accumulation of the national debt, and to the improvident alienation of that fund by which it might have been redeemed. He had blamed no party in particular. From the administration of Sir Robert Walpole to that of Lord North the same course had been pursued, and therefore the same censure applied to all of them. But when it was determined to repair our dilapidated finances by a direct attack on the civil liberties of the American colonies, and the nation was to be plunged into a war to enforce unconditional submission to claims which were

manifestly unjust, it was impossible, as a friend to the real interests of his country and to the undoubted rights of his fellow-subjects, that he should behold these violent measures without anxiety, or express his opinion of them without indignation. I feel no disposition, nor do I know that it would be proper, to enter further into an account of the rise and progress of the American war, than just to mention a few of those circumstances which had a principal effect in producing this unnatural contest, and on which Dr. Price founded his opinion of its injustice.

In the year 1763 the expense incurred by the American colonies in the late war was considered to have so far exceeded its due proportion, that they were compensated for the same by Parliament, in consequence of a direct recommendation from the King in their behalf. The imposition of the Stamp Duty therefore in 1765, during the administration of Mr. George Grenville, had

not the plea in its support of reimbursing the nation for any expenditure in defence of the colonies, but must have originated entirely from a determination of making them contribute, without their own consent, to the permanent revenue of the mother-country. The opposition and disturbances which might naturally have been expected to arise from a law passed with such an intention, produced its repeal in the following year, under the administration of the Marquis of Rockingham. This repeal, however, was accompanied with a Resolution declaring that *the King and Parliament had, have, and of right ought to have, full power and authority to make laws and statutes of sufficient force to bind the colonies and people of America, subjects of the crown of Great Britain, in all cases whatever.* A declaration in which tyranny was expressed in its strongest terms, was not likely to conciliate the minds of any people endued with the slightest spark

of liberty, and consequently had little or no effect in appeasing those commotions which had been excited by the former acts of the British legislature. In the succeeding administration of the Duke of Grafton new laws of violence and concession were alternately enacted; and among the latter, an Act was passed in the year 1770 repealing the laws for raising a revenue on every article *except a duty of one penny a pound on tea*, which, like the Declaratory Act of the Rockingham administration, seems to be reserved as fuel for a future combustion.—Accordingly, in the year 1774 Lord North, who had succeeded the Duke of Grafton as first Lord of the Treasury, with the view of serving the East India Company, and at the same time of deriving a revenue from the American colonies, procured a law to be passed which gave them leave to export their tea (of which they had then about seventeen millions of pounds in their warehouses) to any country free of all duty whatever. The

Company, after some hesitation, were induced by this permission to freight some ships with this article for different ports of America. The small quantities of English, compared with the much larger quantities of foreign teas, had hitherto led the colonies, with the exception of some few murmurs and discontents, to acquiesce in the trifling duty which they paid on this article. But when they perceived the immense quantities of it that were now introduced, and the evident design of the minister in so doing, the alarm became general throughout the provinces—the tea was thrown into the sea at Boston—other acts of violence succeeded—a civil war broke out—and on the issue of the contest, in the opinion of a great majority of the more enlightened and virtuous, depended the existence of the rights and liberties not only of America, but of this country.

Impressed with these sentiments, and alarmed at the fatal consequences of a war

in which the resources, the public credit and prosperity of the kingdom were so deeply involved, Dr. Price was anxious that every possible effort should be exerted to oppose the prosecution of it *. At the

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* The following letter from Dr. Franklin will show the repugnance with which the Americans entered upon this war, and the interest which Dr. Price took in preserving and promoting peace between the two countries.

"I wish as ardently as you can do for peace, and should "rejoice exceedingly in co-operating with you to that end. "—But every ship from Britain brings some intelligence "of new measures that tend more and more to exasperate, "and it seems to me that, until you have found by dear "experience the reducing us by force impracticable, you "will think of nothing fair and reasonable. We have as "yet resolved only on defensive measures. If you would "recall your forces and stay at home, we should meditate "nothing to injure you. A little time so given for cooling "on both sides would have excellent effects. But you will "goad and provoke us.—You despise us too much—and "you are insensible of the Italian adage, that there is no "*little enemy*.—I am persuaded that the body of the British "people are our friends—but they are changeable, and by "your lying gazettes may soon be made our enemies. Our "respect for them will proportionably diminish, and I see "clearly we are on the high road to mutual family hatred

commencement of hostilities the resistance of the colonies was by no means so popular

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" and detestation.—A separation of course will be inevitable.
" 'Tis a million of pities so fair a plan as we have hitherto
" been engaged in for increasing strength and empire with
" public felicity should be destroyed by the mangling hands
" of a few blundering ministers.—It will not be destroyed
" —God will protect and prosper it.—You will only ex-
" clude yourselves from any share in it. We hear that
" more ships and troops are coming out. We know that
" you may do us a great deal of mischief, but we are de-
" termined to bear it patiently as long as we can.—But if
" you flatter yourselves with beating us into submission,
" you know neither the people nor the country.—The
" Congress is still sitting, and will wait the result of their
" *last* petition."

" *Philadelphia, October* 3, 1775."

From the subjoined extract of a letter written in the February following by Mr. Ewing of Philadelphia, it will be seen that Dr. Franklin was fully justified in his predictions.

" It is not easy to conceive the spirit that reigns through
" the colonies, nor the determined resolution to suffer the
" last extremities rather than submit to the claims of Par-
" liament to tax them without their consent. This spirit,
" like an electric shock, rose and pervaded all ranks and
" conditions of men upon the affair of Lexington; and
" every step of Administration since, has heightened the
" indignation they feel against the authors of their suffer-

among the multitude as might have been expected. This arose partly from the misrepresentations of ministers and their adherents, and partly perhaps from the ignorance and inattention of the public to the principles on which that resistance was founded. It was impossible therefore that Dr. Price could have rendered more effectual service to those exertions which he was so anxious to promote, than by leading the public to more correct opinions bn the nature of civil liberty in general, and to a more thorough knowledge of the indefeasible rights which the Americans opposed to the claims of the mother-country. In the winter of 1775 he devoted the principal part of his time to this important work, and in the beginning of the following year published his "Ob-

"ings. Be assured that no oratory or speciousness of address "are in danger of making the least impression upon them. "I have conversed with many members of the Congress, "and find them determined not to recede in the least from "the terms they first proposed—at least till proposals are "made them by Administration," &c.

servations on Civil Liberty, and the Justice and Policy of the War with America." His natural diffidence and modesty did not suffer him to entertain very sanguine hopes of success, and therefore his feelings were the more highly gratified by the very favourable manner in which this work was received by the public.—So eagerly and universally was it read, that the press could not supply the demands for it.—In the course of a few days several thousands were sold; and such was the rapid progress of the impression which it made and of the admiration which it excited, that the friends and supporters of the Americans thought they could not better serve the cause than by extending the sale of it to all ranks of society. Application was in consequence made to Dr. Price for his permission to print a cheap edition of it immediately; which with a noble disinterestedness he granted without hesitation, and thus sacrificed all private emolument (which in this case would have

been very considerable) to the support of a cause from which he could not possibly derive any other benefit than what arises from the consciousness of having endeavoured to deserve well of mankind. In proportion to the popularity and admiration which Dr. Price acquired by this invaluable work among the friends of American *freedom*, was the rancorous abuse which he received from the advocates of American *subjection*. The Rockinghamites, though they opposed the war on the ground of its *inexpediency*, never argued against the *injustice* of it; nor could they indeed have well done this, consistently with their Declaratory Act in 1767. Dr. Price's principles therefore were much too liberal for their creed, and were regarded by them in a light no less unfavourable than by the most strenuous supporters of Administration. Hence that very equivocal friend of liberty, Mr. Edmund Burke, took occasion, in his letter to

the Sheriffs of Bristol, to censure some of Dr. Price's principles on the origin of government, and to advance sentiments of his own as to the omnipotence of the British Parliament, which proved that he differed from ministers only as to the *time* and not as to the *right* of taxing America. I know not whether any others of the same party were among the numerous host of writers who attempted to refute and expose Dr. Price's opinions, for he noticed no other; and even in his remarks on Mr. Burke, he modestly defends himself, and with particular candour expresses his regret rather than the slightest resentment at having him for his opponent.—On the side of the ministry, his adversaries were in dreadful array. From Dr. Markham the archbishop of York, to John Wesley and his apostles in the Tabernacle, the preachers of the Gospel of peace denounced their anathemas against the friend of conciliation and harmony, whose only aim was to

prevent the ravages of war, by attempting at least to point out the folly and injustice of it. Nothing could more strongly show the importance of this work and the effect it produced, than the immense number of pamphlets which were published in answer, or rather in abuse of it. The writers of these pamphlets consisted for the most part either of those who were the immediate pensioners of Government, such as Johnson, Shebbeare, Macpherson, Lind, &c., or of such as hoped to recommend themselves to a place among that honourable band. The arguments, however, of the best of them, in Dr. Price's opinion, required no reply; and as to their abuse, he was so conscious of the rectitude of his own intentions, and blessed with a temper so mild and tranquil, that their invectives neither disturbed his repose nor excited his resentment.—He suffered them to expire in silence; and certainly this was the best service which he could render the authors

of them. It is probable, however, that Dr. Price's opponents did not wholly consist of the pensioned adherents of Government. Some of them might have been incited by more honourable motives.—But from whatever source their opposition originated, it had but little effect in diminishing his popularity or checking the progress of his publication.—In the course of a few months, by means of the cheap edition, near 60,000 copies of it had been disposed of; and amidst the great number of private congratulations which he received on having so well supported the cause of liberty, he was gratified in a more public manner, by having the freedom of the city of London presented to him in a gold box by the aldermen and common council, as a "testi-"mony of their approbation of his princi-"ples, and of the high sense which they "entertained of the excellence of his ob-"servations on the justice and policy of "the war with America."—Nor was his

popularity confined to this country:—On the western side of the Atlantic it so far prevailed, that these observations, in conjunction with another celebrated but less temperate pamphlet, were believed to have had no inconsiderable effect in determining the Americans to declare their independence.

As the colonies were now denounced by Parliament to be in a state of actual rebellion, all direct intercourse between the two countries was necessarily destroyed. Through the medium of France, however, an indirect communication was continued, and Dr. Price was constantly in the habit of having letters transmitted to him from America by his friend Dr. Franklin, who resided in Paris at that time as ambassador from the United States. These letters never failed to contain the warmest expressions of gratitude for the zeal and abilities with which he had written in defence of America, and in support of the cause of general

liberty and justice. But in other respects they are altogether uninteresting, and contain no information, except the detail of some military operations, (which had already appeared in the newspapers,) and the regret of the writers at the unnatural contest in which they were engaged. From the decided manner in which he had declared his sentiments, Dr. Price was aware of the peculiar circumstances of his situation, and therefore was particularly cautious in regard to his correspondence with his American friends. Among the few copies which are preserved of his letters to these persons, this is invariably the case, and in one of them he observes that "he is be-
"come so marked and obnoxious that
"prudence requires him to be very cau-
"tious—that he avoids all correspondence
"even with Dr. Franklin, though so near
"him as Paris—and for this reason de-
"clines giving Mr. Gordon the assistance
"he desires in writing the History of the

"present war,"—adding, however, at the same time, "that any information respect-
"ing it would be very acceptable to him,
"for there was less danger in receiving than
"in sending accounts." In another letter he makes an apology for not answering a very innocent question, merely on the same ground. I know not how far this excessive caution was necessary in Dr. Price: but I believe that he alarmed himself much more than he had need to have done; for the administration of Lord North, though directed like that of one of his successors to a wrong object, was not signalized by sounding the tocsin against the friends of liberty, nor by an attempt at involving whole societies of them in one general proscription as conspirators and traitors against the laws and government of their country.

In the spring of 1777 he published a second pamphlet, containing additional observations on the nature and value of civil

liberty—on the war with America—and on the debts and resources of Great Britain. This work, in return for the honour which they had just conferred upon him, was dedicated to the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and Commons of the City of London; and was written, partly with the view of explaining more fully his former observations on the nature of civil liberty, but principally with the view of warning the nation of the impolicy and danger of the war, by exhibiting a faithful account of the debts and taxes with which it was already encumbered. The popularity of the former pamphlet insured the success of this, though it wanted no such aid for its support. Being, however, chiefly appropriated to the discussion of financial subjects, it was not to be expected that it should be so universally read, nor even that the more popular observations on civil liberty and the American war, though written with equal ardour and ability, should make the same impression,

as when they first excited the public admiration by their novelty as well as their excellence. But though not quite so rapid in its sale as the former, this work passed through several editions, and stirred up a host of opponents equally numerous and virulent, who, like their predecessors, had as little effect in disturbing the author's peace as in influencing the opinions of the public. The alarm with which Dr. Price contemplated the scarcity of coin compared with the redundancy of paper-money, and the dreadful consequences to be apprehended from the failure of the Bank and the accumulation of the public debt, though felt by many in common with himself, appears to have been premature; and the sorrowful experience of the last eighteen years has proved that the gold may entirely disappear from circulation,—the kingdom be inundated with paper and base coin,—that the Bank may stop payment; and for many years after these

events, that an unceasing expenditure may add above 500 millions to the debt, without deterring ministers from making still further additions, or alarming the nation with its nearer approach to the ruin which he foreboded. After the publication of these two pamphlets, Dr. Price had determined to take no further part in the political contentions of that time, but to retire, as he observes in some of his letters to his American correspondents, "an anxious spectator of the present contest, with the satisfaction of having endeavoured to communicate just ideas of government, and of the nature and value of civil liberty." In forming this determination he certainly mistook the disposition of his own mind; for his anxiety was much too intense to permit him to remain a silent spectator of events, on which he believed the welfare and happiness of this country and America so essentially to depend. Whenever Government therefore thought proper to pro-

claim a fast, he considered it more as a political than a religious ordinance, and always took an opportunity on that day, contrary to his invariable practice on other days of religious worship, to deliver his sentiments on the conduct of the war, and on the evil consequences which were likely to result from it. His hearers on these occasions were very numerous; nor was it possible that they should not have been deeply impressed by the honest warmth and energy with which he delivered his discourses, and also by that mild simplicity of manner which distinguished his whole conduct, and which was formed to engage every heart in his favour, however much it might have been imbued with different opinions.—But of all these discourses he only published those which he delivered on the fast-days in the years 1779 and 1781. To the former of these he was induced to add a postscript, in consequence of a violent attack from Dr. Lowth, bishop of London,

in a sermon preached on the preceding Ash-wednesday in the Chapel Royal, which he afterwards published and addressed to the clergy of his diocese. Unfortunately for the bishop, he had maintained those very opinions in former times, which he now reprobated with so much vehemence; and Dr. Price, as the best answer, quoted a few passages from what the learned prelate had written in his earlier years, and left him to the choice either of condemning his old principles, or attempting the more difficult task of reconciling them with his new ones*.

* Dr. Price having asserted in his first tract, that "as "far as in any instance the operation of any cause comes "in to restrain the power of self-government in a state, so "far slavery is introduced," and in his second tract, that "the representation of a kingdom ought to be complete, "and that no state (a part of which only is represented in "the legislature that governs it) can be said to be self-"governed," the bishop says that it follows from these assertions "that a vast MAJORITY of the people of Eng-"land, all that have no votes for representatives in parlia-"ment, are slaves:" and yet in a sermon preached at the assizes in Durham, in the year 1764, this very same Dr.

The abuse which was so unsparingly heaped on Dr. Price by the advocates for the unconditional submission of the Americans, was amply compensated to him by

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Lowth observes, that "the greatest and most important "privilege that any people can possibly enjoy, is to be "governed by laws framed by their own advice or con- "sent." This he represents "as the true liberty of a "state, and the particular happiness of the collective body "of people in this country, in virtue of the right of repre- "sentation which they enjoy, the act of representatives "freely chosen by themselves being their own act." In another part of his sermon he says that "the true and per- "fect liberty of a people consists in their enjoying secu- "rity from oppression under the protection of THEIR OWN "LAWS."—And again, that "the people of this nation do "enjoy, as fully *as in the nature of things they are capable* "*of enjoying*, and as far as they have the will and the "virtue to enjoy it, the great advantage of being go- "verned by laws of their own framing, or to which they "give their free consent." Here then we see the bishop maintaining the same principles with Dr. Price, against whom he inveighs with so much acrimony as an encourager of sedition and rebellion, and directly contradicts his own assertion, "that a *vast majority* of the people of England, "having no votes for representatives in parliament, do not "give their assent to the laws by which they are governed, "and therefore are not *self*-governed."

the esteem and respect of the unbiassed friends of liberty and justice in this and other countries. Among the ablest of his correspondents may be numbered M. Turgot, the late comptroller of the finances in France, who, in consequence of the mention made of his administration in the second tract on civil liberty, wrote an admirable letter to Dr. Price on the subject, and continued his correspondence with him to the end of his life. The truly philosophic and liberal principles, together with the sound reasoning contained in M. Turgot's first letter, induced Dr. Price to insert a copy of it, after his death, in a subsequent publication*, and therefore it will be unnecessary to repeat the insertion of it in this work.

Although these excellent men entirely agreed in their opinions on civil and reli-

* In his advice to the Americans on the formation of their government.

gious liberty, it appears from some parts of their correspondence, that they differed much as to their expectations in regard to the good effects of the American revolution to mankind. In his answer to M. Turgot's first letter Dr. Price says—
"Happy is it for the subjects of the "wretched and corrupt governments of "Europe, that there is an asylum now "opened for them in America. This has "a tendency to soften the despotisms of "Europe; and by operating in this way, "and calling the attention of men to the "principles of civil authority, our quarrel "with America is likely to do the greatest "service to mankind. I look indeed to "the new world with satisfaction and tri-"umph; and the time probably will come, "when a great part of Europe will be "flocking to a country where, unmolested "by spiritual and civil tyranny, they will "be able to enjoy in safety the exercise

" of reason and the rights of men."—To which M. Turgot writes in reply, " Je ne " vous parle plus des Américains; car " quelque soit le denouement de cette " guerre, j'ai un peu perdu l'espérance de " voir sur la terre une nation vraiment libre " et vivant sans guerre. Ce spectacle " est reservé à des siècles bien éloignés." It must be acknowledged that subsequent events have afforded melancholy proof that M. Turgot's despondency was well founded, and that the American revolution is not likely to fulfil the sanguine expectations of Dr. Price, either in softening the despotisms of the old world, or preventing the rage for war from inflaming the inhabitants of the new one. But Dr. Price was not singular in his expectations. Many of those wise and venerable persons who at that time directed the councils of America indulged the same hopes; and had equal wisdom and moderation prevailed in the

councils of their successors, it is not probable that those hopes would have been so soon disappointed, or that the friends of peace should have had to lament, in the infant states of America, those follies and vices which have so long embroiled the old governments of Europe.

The honest and ardent zeal with which Dr. Price had defended the rights of America, and the great financial knowledge which he had displayed in his different publications, induced the Congress of the United States, as well in testimony of their gratitude as in the hope of availing themselves of his abilities, to send him a formal invitation to come and reside among a people who knew how to appreciate his talents, and who would be truly happy to see them exerted in their behalf. In the winter of 1778 the following letter, containing the resolution of Congress, was transmitted to him from their ambassadors in France:—

"*Passy, near Paris, December 7, 1778.*

"SIR,

"By one of the latest ships from Ame-
"rica we had the pleasure of receiving
"from Congress an attested copy of their
"resolution of the sixth of October in
"these words:—

"*In Congress, 6th of October, 1778.*

"Resolved,

"That the Honourable Benjamin Frank-
"lin, Arthur Lee, and John Adams, Esqrs.,
"or any one of them, be directed forth-
"with to apply to Dr. Price, and inform
"him, that it is the desire of Congress to
"consider him as a citizen of the United
"States, and to receive his assistance in
"regulating their finances.—That if he
"shall think it expedient to remove with
"his family to America and afford such
"assistance, a generous provision shall be
"made for requiting his services.

"Extract from the Minutes,

"CHARLES THOMPSON, Secy."

"From a great respect to the character "of Dr. Price, we have much satisfaction in "communicating this resolution. We re- "quest your answer, sir, as soon as may "be convenient. If it should be in the "affirmative, you may depend upon us to "discharge the expense of your journey "and voyage, and for every assistance in "our power to make your passage agree- "able, as well as your reception and ac- "commodation in our country. We have "the honour to be, with the highest esteem "and respect, sir,

"Your most obedient

"and most humble servants,

"B. FRANKLIN.

"ARTHUR LEE *.

"JOHN ADAMS.

"*Dr. PRICE.*"

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* The following letter, written by Mr. Lee, accompanied this invitation:—

"*Paris, December 8th,* 1778.

"DEAR SIR,

"I cannot express the pleasure I felt at receiving the "vote which accompanies this. I am in the fullest hope,

If we may reason from the manner in which the American finances have been

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"that both your inclination and your circumstances will "permit you to gratify our wishes.

"You are sensible how much the future happiness of a "people depends upon the proper management of their "finances, how difficult it is to remedy original defects in "all constitutions, and therefore how much ill you will "prevent and how much good promote by giving the as-"sistance that is requested.

"It seems that where you are, your aid is not required. "Those who conduct that government esteem themselves "much abler to manage than you can advise. And in-"deed, considering how opposite their end is to ours, I "think they are right. Their abilities are exactly shaped "to their purpose—the ruin of the empire. Let me "therefore beseech you to come where you will be wel-"come and useful.—It will be the noblest consolation for "the calamities that must fall upon the old people to pro-"mote the happiness of the new.—As long as there was "any hope of preventing those calamities, your utmost "endeavours were not wanting. But the total prevalence "of vice and corruption has not left a probability of "amendment.—In this situation, the pure and unambi-"tioned voice of Congress has desired your assistance in "a manner that bears the most honourable testimony of "your merit, and of their wishes to promote the per-"manent good of the people who have reposed in them "the guardianship of their rights and interests.

since conducted, no people had greater need of assistance. But they were not

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"It is the voice of wisdom which calls you to the no-
"blest of all works—the assisting to form a government
"which means to make the principles of equal justice and
"the general rights the chief objects of its attention. Ge-
"nerations yet unborn may bless the contributors to this
"inestimable work, and among them I trust the name of
"Dr. Price will hold a distinguished place.

"I am, with the sincerest respect and friendship,

"Dear sir, yours &c.

"ARTHUR LEE."

In answer to the *official* invitation of the American Commissioners, Dr. Price sent the following note inclosed in a private letter to Mr. Lee :—

"*Newington Green, January 19th*, 1779.

"Dr. Price returns his best thanks to the Honourable
"Dr. Franklin, Arthur Lee, and John Adams, Esqrs., for
"conveying to him the resolution of Congress of the 6th
"of October last, by which he is invited to become a
"member of the American States, and his assistance is
"desired in regulating their finances. It is not possible
"for him to express the sense he has of the honour this
"resolution does him, and the satisfaction with which he
"reflects on the favourable opinion of him which has oc-
"casioned it.—But he knows himself to be ill qualified
"for giving such assistance, and he is also so connected
"in this country, and advancing so fast into the evening

likely to derive it from the personal exertions of Dr. Price.—However zealous he might have been in their support, however ready to communicate his advice, he was too much attached to this country, and connected by too many ties of friendship and affection, to exchange his present abode, and at the advanced age of near threescore years to think of forming new connexions beyond the Atlantic. He did not hesitate, therefore, civilly to decline this invitation of the Congress; which, if no such ties had existed, the humble and modest opinion he always entertained of his own abilities would certainly have induced him to do.

It will be observed, that in the conclu-

" of life, that he cannot think of a removal. He requests " the favour of the honourable Commissioners to transmit " this reply to Congress, with assurances that he feels the " warmest gratitude for the notice taken of him, and that " he looks to the United States as now the hope, and likely " soon to become the refuge, of mankind."

sion of his first tract on civil liberty Dr. Price recommends a plan for conciliating the Americans which had been lately proposed in the House of Lords by the Earl of Shelburne; and this he was led to do, not only from its containing principles congenial with his own, but from the hope that it would derive greater weight when supported by such authority. It is very probable also that the intimate friendship which subsisted between Lord Shelburne and himself might have had some effect on Dr. Price in recommending this plan; and his friends expressed their fears at the time that such a recommendation might give his work the appearance of a party-publication.—Nothing, however, was further from his intention.—Having no private interest to serve, he cared very little who were *in*, or who were *out* of power; and if, instead of those measures which he considered as so destructive to the welfare and happiness of the kingdom, a system of

peace and œconomy had been adopted, it would have been totally indifferent to him whether Lord North or Lord Shelburne administered the affairs of this country. No person engaged in political discussions with more disinterested views; and if he ever expressed a wish to see Lord Shelburne at the head of Administration, it arose from a belief that he would pursue such measures as would restore the nation to peace and prosperity, rather than from any motive of personal esteem and friendship.

His intimacy with Lord Shelburne necessarily produced a like intimacy with Mr. Dunning and Colonel Barré; and to the kind assistance of the latter he was indebted for most of the parliamentary documents which enabled him to write with so much accuracy on the public finances. Among other instances of profusion which distinguished this war from all that preceded it, were the shameful bargains that were made with the different contractors

for supplying the army and navy with stores and provisions. Against some of these, and particularly against Alderman Harley's contract for sending coin to Canada, and Atkinson's rum contract, Colonel Barré inveighed with his usual energy in the House of Commons. But in order more effectually to expose these and other transactions of the same kind, it was determined that an account of them should be laid before the public, together with some observations on the profligate manner in which the resources of the country were lavished, and on the ruin which it threatened to the liberties and property of the people.—A small pamphlet was in consequence written under the title of "Facts addressed to the Subjects of Great Britain and Ireland;" the financial part of which had been composed by Dr. Price, the other parts principally by Mr. Horne Tooke.—When this pamphlet was ready for publication, Lord Shelburne objecting to some

passages of it wished the whole to be suppressed. But Mr. Tooke thought differently on the occasion, and caused it immediately to be published in direct opposition to his Lordship's wishes. This necessarily produced a quarrel between them, which admitted of no reconciliation during the remainder of their lives. I know not what induced Lord Shelburne to object to the publication of this admirable pamphlet, which particularly recommended those very measures proposed by the Duke of Richmond and himself in the House of Lords, as the best means of saving the nation; and, while it exposed the extravagance of the present expenditure compared with that of former wars, recited only mere matters of fact deduced from documents which had already been laid before Parliament:—and as to the indignation which it expressed at the frauds of contractors and the criminal negligence of the Minister in his bargains with some of them, it only adopted in more

moderate terms the language of Mr. Dunning, Colonel Barré, and his other friends, when they reprobated those abuses with so much severity and justice in the House of Commons. But it can now be of little use to enter further into this discussion, and it will be sufficient to observe that this anonymous pamphlet passed through seven or eight editions in a few months, without exciting the wrath of the Attorney-general, or, I believe, awakening the Minister to more vigilance and œconomy in the expenditure of the public money.—But this destructive system of profusion, which consumed the resources of the country and threatened the utter ruin of public credit, was not the only evil which alarmed the apprehensions of Dr. Price. The increasing burthens which oppressed the poor, together with the growing luxury and extravagance which pervaded the higher ranks of society, were, in his opinion, making dreadful inroads into the population of the

kingdom; and with a view of warning the nation of its danger, he published in 1779 an "Essay on the Population of England" from the Revolution to that Time, in which, if the documents whence he derived his information had been correct, he clearly proved a decrease of more than *one fourth* in the number of inhabitants; or, in other words, that the population which in 1690 exceeded six millions and a half, had in less than a century been reduced to five millions. In the former period the number of houses amounted, according to the returns of the surveyors of the house and window duties, to 1,320,000—in the latter only to 952,000; and as Dr. Price was incontestably right in regard to the number of persons in each house, it is manifest, if these returns had been accurate, that he would have been perfectly correct in his conclusions.—But the surveyors, in returning the houses excused on account of poverty, appear to have been exceedingly de-

ficient, and in consequence the conclusions of Dr. Price are proportionably incorrect. If the late enumerations are to be depended upon, the paupers are *five times* more numerous than he had imagined; and within the last ten years, notwithstanding a continued war with all its evils, the inhabitants of Great Britain have increased above a *million and a half;* and this increase is going on so rapidly according to these accounts, that we are in danger of proving the truth of Mr. Malthus's theory, rather than of fulfilling the prediction of Dr. Price.

But finance and politics were not the only subjects which at this period engaged Dr. Price's time and attention. In consequence of Dr. Priestley's disquisitions on matter and spirit which had just been published, he was led to make some observations on those parts which did not accord with his own sentiments, and to communicate them privately to the author, with the

wish, however, that they might be published together with any remarks which he should think proper to make upon them. Dr. Priestley readily assented to his friend's request, and it was consequently agreed that they should enter into an amicable discussion of those subjects; the one proposing his objections—the other answering them—the one again replying to these answers, and the other rejoining to these replies, till each should at length be satisfied that he had done all the justice in his power to his several arguments. This metaphysical controversy was distinguished from all others in one respect: It neither disturbed the friendship of the parties, nor abated the high opinion which each entertained of his adversary's talents and integrity; but, like all other controversies of the same kind, it left both as it found them, in the full persuasion of the truth of his own opinions. I feel no desire to engage in metaphysical disquisitions, nor to enter

into a minute account of this controversy. I shall therefore only observe on the subject of *matter*, that Dr. Priestley, in opposition to Dr. Price, maintained that it was neither solid, impenetrable, nor inert—that it was merely an extended surface possessed of certain powers of attraction and repulsion, and therefore capable of acting where it was not present; or, according to another definition, that it was composed of a number of indivisible centres of attraction and repulsion; and since these centres are mere imaginary points, Dr. Price observed that it can have no extension nor indeed any existence at all.—On the nature of mind and spirit, Dr. Priestley asserts that we have no soul separate from the body; but that the faculty of thinking, being the result of a certain arrangement of the parts of matter, is wholly carried on *in* and *by* the brain itself. On the contrary, Dr. Price maintains that mind is *one*, being totally distinct from the body, and admits of no

division; and that on the supposition of the brain's being the sole organ of thought and perception, it will follow, from the circumstance of matter's being divisible, that the mind must be composed of a multitude of beings, and therefore that man may be divided into a multitude of *selves*. On the doctrine of *necessity* Dr. Priestley utterly denies the free agency of man—maintains that there is but one cause, one sole agent in nature, that no action or event could possibly have been different from what it has been, is, or will be; and that if all mankind were perfect philosophers and necessarians, they would ascribe to God their evil dispositions no less than their good ones; or, in other words, they would consider themselves as fellow-workers with him in their vices as well as their virtues. From these new philosophical principles, as he calls them, Dr. Priestley finds that Christian Necessarians derive that excellence of character which renders them the

most distinguished for active and sublime virtues!!—I shall not enter upon the arguments which Dr. Price opposed to the doctrine of necessity, nor upon those which Dr. Priestley advanced in support of it; but I cannot help thinking that it is as well for the world that neither Christ nor his apostles appear to have professed this new philosophy when they delivered their instructions to mankind.—How far either party succeeded in these discussions I am not anxious to decide. This will most probably be determined, as in all cases of the same kind, according to the preconceived opinions of those that read them. On one point, however, all must agree:—Of the purity of the motives which led each of these good men to engage in the controversy there can be no doubt; nor is it possible not to admire the zeal and sincerity which they manifest throughout the whole of it in promoting the great cause of truth and virtue. The subjects of this contro-

versy (in their nature abstruse and unsatisfactory) do not in general either engage the attention or interest the feelings of the public; and had Dr. Price always confined himself to the doubts and difficulties of metaphysics, it is certain that he might still have had reason to lament his unpopularity as a preacher: but having directed his studies to subjects more generally understood, and more immediately connected with the interest and happiness of mankind, the popularity which he justly acquired as the zealous defender of civil and religious liberty, he now also enjoyed as the animated advocate of morality and virtue. From his first publication on the American war, the sermons which he had formerly preached to a few persons scattered among the empty pews of his meeting-house, were now delivered to crowded and admiring congregations; and such was the excellence of his discourses—so devout and animated his manner of conducting the

service, that those whose curiosity led them to hear him as the friend of liberty, transferred this admiration to the nobler qualities which he displayed as the friend of true religion and piety.

With the exception of two Fast Sermons which he published in 1779 and 1781, Dr. Price, during the remainder of the American war, continued a silent spectator of events; and his time, exclusive of the hours which his duties as a minister required, was chiefly employed in carrying on an extensive correspondence; of which, however, he was accustomed to complain as having become extremely irksome to him.—The different subjects on which he had written will partly account for the great number of his correspondents; and as he was rather slow in writing letters, it is no wonder that he should regret the toil of having so many to engage his attention.

The protracted continuance of the war had now involved the kingdom in consi-

derable difficulties, and the prospect of forcing the Americans to unconditional submission was daily becoming more hopeless. Dr. Price therefore, though a silent, had never ceased to be an anxious spectator of events:—But the abuse and calumny with which he was assailed, increased in proportion to the nearer accomplishment of his wishes, and the disappointment of his opponents. He was not only represented as an abandoned profligate in some of those periodical publications which set truth and decency at defiance, but he was continually annoyed with anonymous letters, accusing him as a traitor, and even threatening him with assassination; but neither the scurrility of the one nor the menaces of the other had the least effect in disturbing the tranquillity of his temper, or in diminishing that cheerfulness and benevolence which endeared him to all his friends. At length, however, after expending above 150 millions in the attempt, the

subjugation of America became utterly desperate, and the ministers, no longer supported by their usual majorities in the House of Commons, resigned their places in March 1782. A new administration was soon formed, composed of the Marquis of Rockingham, Lord Shelburne, Mr. Fox, and other leading members of the opposition, who immediately adopted such measures as tended to conciliate the colonies and to restore a general peace in Europe and America*. But they had scarcely

* On the occasion of the peace, he received the following letter from Dr. Franklin, whose favourable opinion of his writings, made ample amends for all the abuse which had been heaped upon him by the pensioned advocates for American subjugation.

"*Passy, June* 13, 1782.

"DEAR SIR,

"I congratulate you on the late revolution in your pub-
"lic affairs. Much good may arise from it, though pos-
"sibly not all that good men and even the new ministers
"themselves may have wished or expected. The change,
"however, in the sentiments of the nation, *in which I see*
"*evident effects of your writings* with those of our deceased

commenced this salutary work, before the whole phalanx was broken up and destroyed

"friend Mr. Burgh *, and others of our valuable Club, "should encourage you to proceed. The ancient Roman "and Greek orators could only speak to the number of "citizens capable of being assembled within the reach of "their voice. Their writings had little effect, because the "bulk of the people could not read.—Now by the press "we can speak to nations; and good books and well-writ- "ten pamphlets have great and general influence. The "facility with which the same truths may be repeatedly "enforced by placing them daily in different lights in "newspapers which are every where read, gives a great "chance of establishing them. And we now find that it "is not only right to strike while the iron is hot, but that "it may be very practicable to heat it by continually "striking. I suppose all may now correspond with more "freedom, and I shall be glad to hear from you as often

* The death of this amiable and excellent person had happened a few weeks before the writing of this letter.—He had long been the intimate friend of Dr. Price, and one of the principal members of his congregation at Newington Green.—He was the author of several valuable works on moral and political subjects, and in all of them proved himself the steadfast friend of virtue and liberty. His last publication, under the title of "Political Disquisitions," though written under the excruciating agonies of the stone, abounds with the most important information on the extreme defectiveness of the national representation, and cannot fail to be admired by all who wish to restore the constitution to its original purity.

by the death of the Marquis of Rockingham. On this unfortunate event a contention for power arose between the friends of Lord Shelburne and those of the Duke of Portland, which terminated in favour of the former, and consequently in the resignation and inveterate hatred of the latter. The cabals and intrigues which produced and fomented these dissensions form no part of my design in writing this history. I shall therefore only observe, that however much Dr. Price's friendship disposed him to consider Lord Shelburne in the right on this occasion, he by no means approved of some of the associates whom he had chosen for himself from among the members of

"as may be convenient to you. Please to present my best "respects to our good old friends of the London Coffee-"house. I often figure to myself the pleasure I should "have in being once more seated among them. With the "greatest and most sincere esteem and affection, I am, "my dear friend, yours ever,

"B. FRANKLIN."

Lord North's administration. Nevertheless, the abilities displayed in conducting the negotiation, for peace, and in bringing the war to a speedy and upon the whole a favourable termination—the plans also which were in contemplation for restoring the finances, and the different measures which were proposed for improving the condition of the kingdom, led him and the friends of peace and liberty in general to entertain the highest hopes from this administration. In the King's speech, which was delivered at the opening of the session in December 1782, that part of it which expresses a wish "that such regulations "may be established, such savings made, "and future loans so constructed as to pro-"mote the means of their gradual redemp-"tion by a fixed course of payment," was suggested, and I believe inserted in the very words of Dr. Price. So intimate was his connexion with Lord Shelburne at this time,

that he was gravely offered by him the place of private Secretary *. It is hardly necessary to observe that he declined an offer so little suited to his habits and disposition, or that the honour and emoluments of office were as unnecessary to engage him in favour of a good administration, as they would have been ineffectual in securing his support of a bad one. His connexion with Lord Shelburne was continued from no motive of private interest; for though he had long been honoured with his confidence, he neither sought a place nor asked a favour for himself or his friends. His attachment therefore to him as prime-minister was disinterested in the highest degree, and, exclusive of the partiality of friendship, was founded on the hope and belief that he would pursue such

* His Lordship surely could not be in earnest in making such an offer. It was no doubt meant as a compliment, and the simplicity of Dr. Price considered it in that light, though, as a friend observed, the Minister might as well have proposed to make him *Master of the horse.*

measures as would restore public credit, and check that corruption which exhausted the resources and endangered the liberties of the country: nor do I know that there was any sufficient reason to apprehend that this hope would have been disappointed, had Lord Shelburne been continued long enough in power to carry his measures into execution. The former principles and practice of some of his associates were perhaps unfavourable to the expectation of any substantial reform, and the gradual declension of Dr. Price's visits at Shelburne House did not render the prospect more encouraging. —But what might have been effected by this administration it is now of little consequence to inquire. After an existence of a few months it was overthrown by the coalition of two hostile parties, who, forsaking every principle on which they had so long and so vehemently opposed each other, united together for its destruction, with the view of succeeding to the joint par-

ticipation of a power which neither of them could have separately obtained. Having been thus forced to resign his office by a combination which sickened every honest man, Lord Shelburne, upon retiring into private life, renewed that intimacy with Dr. Price which had been partially and perhaps unavoidably interrupted by his public duties in a situation ill-fitted for the social intercourse of disinterested friendship.

Immediately on the termination of the war in 1783, Dr. Price published a small pamphlet, in which he gave an account of the funded and unfunded debt at the time of signing the preliminary articles of peace, which appears to have been increased by the war above 120 millions; and, in allusion to the King's speech at the opening of the session of Parliament, proposed a plan for conducting future loans and for redeeming the public debts. But the ministers who recommended that measure had been succeeded by others who paid little

regard to the recommendations of their predecessors. The next loan, therefore, was made on the same improvident terms with all former loans, and the very idea of rendering it conducive to the redemption of the debt was treated with ridicule and contempt. Disappointed in the hope of a better system of finance, Dr. Price contented himself with giving a very concise account of the principles on which this plan was founded, and of the good effects which were likely to result from it. In the course of a few months, however, these ministers shared the fate of those whom they had displaced, and revived the hope that a more enlightened policy might influence those who succeeded them. Encouraged by this prospect, Dr. Price in the following year published a Postscript to his former pamphlet, in which he repeated his arguments in favour of the plan which he had lately proposed, and drew a comparison between the amount of the debt as stated

by himself with its amount as stated in the Report presented to the House of Commons by the Commissioners who had been appointed by the new administration for examining the public accounts. In this Report he had the satisfaction of seeing those measures, which had lately been treated with so little attention and respect, recommended in the strongest terms, and the necessity of abandoning the present ruinous system enforced by the same arguments with which he had long endeavoured in vain to impress the public.

The warm and active benevolence of Dr. Price was not confined to this country; but eager to promote the welfare and happiness of all mankind, it was equally gratified by the diffusion of knowledge, liberty, and virtue, whether those blessings were to be enjoyed on this, or on the other side of the globe. His exertions in favour of the American Colonies arose entirely from this principle; and having now suc-

ceeded in establishing their independence, it was his ardent wish that they might form such governments as would render it a benefit to the world. With this view he wrote a pamphlet* addressed to the Uni-

* It appears from a great number of the letters which he received from his friends in America, that he had long been requested to favour them with his advice in regard to the formation of their new governments; and the following extract from one of Dr. Rush's letters will be sufficient to show the high sense which some of the more enlightened men in that country entertained of his abilities.

"*Philadelphia.*

"——Most of the distresses of our country and of the "mistakes which Europeans have formed of us have arisen "from a belief that the American revolution is *over*. This "is so far from being the case, that we have only finished "the first act of the drama.—We have changed our forms "of government; but it remains yet to effect a revolution "in our principles, opinions, and manners, so as to accom- "modate them to the government we have adopted.— "This is the most difficult part of the business of the pa- "triots of our country.—It requires more wisdom and for- "titude than to expel or to reduce armies into captivity. "—I wish to see this idea inculcated by your pen.—Call "upon the rulers of our country to lay the foundation of "their empire in knowledge as well as virtue, &c. This "will render the American revolution a blessing to man-

ted States, which he distributed among them at his own expense, containing observations on the importance of the American revolution, and much valuable advice on the best means of securing those liberties for which they had successfully contended. The first object which he recommended to their attention was the establishment of a Sinking Fund for the redemption of their debts. The next was the cultivation of peace and the formation of a strict political union among themselves; on the preservation of which their credit, liberties, and even their existence depended:—and though the forms of their government were in general much more liberal than those of any other country, yet the observations

"kind. As you have staked your reputation upon this "great event with the world and with posterity, you must "not desert us till you see the curtain drop and the last "act of the drama closed. A small pamphlet addressed "by you to the Congress and the Legislatures of each of "the States would, I am sure, have more weight with our "rulers than an hundred publications thrown out by the "citizens of this country."

which he introduced on civil and religious liberty were not the less important, in leading them to more enlarged views in regard to the freedom of discussion, the liberty of conscience, and the civil establishment of religion. In warning them of the several dangers to which they were exposed, exclusive of those arising from internal wars, the unequal distribution of property, and the endless accumulation of debts, he cautioned them particularly against too eager a pursuit of foreign trade and its attendant evils—the establishment of banks—and the multiplication of paper-money. I know not what attention was paid to these admonitions when they were first delivered, except in a few instances among the more sober and virtuous members of the United States*;

* The following extracts afford some reason to hope that his advice, when first communicated to the people of America, was not wholly thrown away upon them.

Extract of a letter from Mr. Clark at Boston, dated April 1785.

" Your late publication is a noble testimony of that af-
" fection which you always possessed for these States. We

but late events have too clearly shown that their effects must have been very transient; and that wars, debts, taxes, paper-money, and the whole train of evils produced by

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" are all sensible of the honour you have done us, and we " gratefully acknowledge our obligation. Dr. Chauncy is " delighted with the work. He thanks you most sincerely " for the generous concern you have discovered for his " country, and he hopes his country will have wisdom to " adopt the measures you have recommended. Your " chapter on liberal inquiry cannot be sufficiently ad- " mired.—I think it has already liberated some minds. " May it be candidly read by all, and may you have the " exalted happiness of seeing rational Christianity flourish " by your labours!"

Extract of a letter from Dr. Wheeler of Dartmouth College, dated August 1785.

" Your observations on the *importance of the American* " *Revolution* I have had the pleasure to read with particu- " lar attention.—I cannot tell you how great the applause " is which its author receives throughout these States. " The President, confined by a lingering disease, wrote a " letter to the Assembly at their session last February, " inclosing *the Observations*, &c. He informed the Legis- " lature that the remarks in this pamphlet were the best " legacy which he could leave them.—He prayed earnestly " that the spirit of them might animate the manners and " dispositions of legislators and people to the latest age."

the governments of the old world, are not likely to be soon abandoned by those of the new one.

The termination of the war and the successful issue of the contest in favour of liberty, once more restored Dr. Price to the more peaceful and agreeable pursuits of religious and philosophical subjects. From his earliest youth, his opinions on certain points in religion underwent little or no change. In his private letters to his friends a very short time after leaving the academy, he appears, as in his latest discourses, to have considered the pre-existence of Christ, the exalted dignity of his nature, and the effect of his interposition in redeeming the distressed and degraded race of man from death and misery, to be fundamental doctrines of Christianity. But it should be observed that, although these sentiments were first imbibed by him at a period when zeal is apt to mislead the judgement, they were even then maintained

with that diffidence and liberality which distinguished the writings of his maturer years. In general he laid very little stress on creeds and articles of faith. He preferred the *honest* though mistaken opinions of a virtuous and humble mind to the soundest orthodoxy of a conceited bigot, and was more gratified in encouraging a candid inquiry after truth than in making converts to his own system. Among those who embraced the opposite extremes of Trinitarianism and Socinianism, though he differed essentially from both, he had many friends whom he respected and esteemed; but he never wished to enter into any controversy with them on these subjects, though he had long intended to give a fair account of their opinions, with the view of explaining the reasons on which he founded his own. In the year 1786 therefore he published a volume of Sermons, of which half the number were appropriated to doctrinal, the other half

to moral subjects.—In the former were stated, first, the points on which all Christians were agreed—next, the tenets peculiar to Trinitarians and Socinians—and lastly, those of the author himself, which preserved a middle course between those of the two preceding ones.—It forms no part of my design, nor do I feel any inclination, to engage in theological disputes; it will be sufficient therefore to observe that, although Dr. Price's middle scheme seemed to have been better received by the Trinitarians than the Socinians*, it had but

* Extract of a letter from Dr. Adams.

"*Gloucester, 21st December,* 1786.

"DEAR SIR,

"I owe you a thousand thanks for your valuable present. "—I have read your book with great pleasure.—It has in- "deed answered my highest expectations, and I yet expect "more good from it than from any or all the things that I "have read on the same subjects. There is a modesty and "candour throughout, and something so conciliating, espe- "cially in the introduction, as will, I hope, gain it a serious "attention from all parties.—And this with a little reason "and reflection is all that is wanting to gain proselytes to

little effect in satisfying either of them. Dr. Priestley, the strenuous advocate of Socinianism, was among the first to notice these sermons, in a series of letters addressed to Dr. Price, who, from his high regard and respect for the author, was induced to insert a short reply to some of his principal objections, in an appendix to the second edition, which was published in the following year. Another zealous opponent he found in his friend Mr. Lindsey*, whose

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" your cause. At least I find daily, that the more I think " on these subjects, the more I incline to almost all your " opinions. The seasonable check which you have given to " Socinianism will win you some favour from the fiercest " Athanasians: and there is an argument in your book which " I think will operate with great force against the peculiar " doctrine of that creed, &c."

* From the following letter it will be seen that the confident manner in which his opinions were pronounced to be wrong, had but little effect in leading Dr. Price to forsake them.

" DEAR MR. LINDSEY, *May 14th*, 1790.

" I cannot avoid writing to you to return my best thanks " for your second address, and for the very kind notice you

arguments appear to have succeeded no better in convincing him than those of Dr. Priestley. Of the good intentions of both he deservedly entertained the highest opinion; but he always felt hurt at their as-

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" have taken of me in it. Your favourable opinion cannot but " give me particular pleasure, and I hope I shall never lose " it.—I am afraid, however, that I shall be in danger of this, " when I tell you, that after reading your book carefully, " and being instructed by it, I remain unconvinced of the " doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ. This must, " I doubt, appear to you a striking kind of obstinacy; for " I find you think that you have infallibly settled this point; " and you sometimes use expressions which imply, that no " serious searcher after truth, who takes his opinion from " the Bible, and is of a sound understanding, can embrace " a different doctrine. But I know your candour; and you " will, I doubt not, consider in my favour, that this is a " time of life in which we are under the necessity of making " up our minds; and it is my comfort, that whether I have " done this on the side of truth or error, I shall be equally " accepted, provided I have been serious, honest, and dili- " gent in my inquiries. I wish you, Dear Sir, all happi- " ness, and that the remainder of your useful and valuable " life may be crowned with a constant increase of the en- " joyments inseparable from exemplary integrity.

" I am most affectionately yours,

" R. Price."

suming to themselves and their sect exclusively, the appellation of *Unitarians*, (which belongs equally to Jews and Mahometans,) and treating with so much contumely the opinions of those who differed from them. In regard to the Moral Sermons, which constituted the latter part of this volume, no difference of opinion existed. These were equally admired by all the friends of religion and virtue. The goodness of the Deity—the security and happiness of a virtuous course—and the assurance of a resurrection from the dead, are subjects on which all Christians are agreed; and the zeal and energy with which these great and important truths were enforced by the author of these sermons, make us almost regret that he had not devoted the whole of the volume to subjects of the same kind *.

* I hope it will not be improper to insert the following extracts of letters from two of his most distinguished friends on this occasion.

Extract of a letter from Mrs. Chapone, dated Carlisle, December 10th, 1786.

"I am exceedingly charmed with the sermon on the

A few months previous to the publication of these sermons Dr. Price had been visited by a severe domestic affliction in the loss of a wife, whose affectionate attention had long endeared her to him as one of the greatest blessings of his life. Although Mrs. Price's health, from the first year of

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" happiness of virtue—Here you are indeed a most power-
" ful orator! You speak of what you thoroughly *know*, and
" with all the energy and moving eloquence that benevo-
" lence can inspire. Those on the goodness of God were
" also very delightful to me; but I almost wished you had
" not built so much on an assertion which perhaps would
" not be granted by all people—*that happiness so greatly*
" *prevails and preponderates in this world.* If you were to
" ask all your acquaintance (who nevertheless are among
" the best, and therefore the happiest part of mankind)
" whether they would choose to live their lives over again
" exactly as they have passed, rather than remain insensi-
" ble till the general resurrection, perhaps they would not
" embrace the proposal as readily as you would expect.
" For my part, I think the belief of God's goodness does
" not rest upon this. As I know not how much of our
" suffering arises from our own faults—how much is chas-
" tisement—how much is trial—nor how it may conduce
" to our future and eternal good; the miseries of life, even
" if shown to be greater than its enjoyments, would not

her marriage, had never been perfectly restored, she had, however, so far recovered her strength and spirits as to be capable of enjoying the society of her friends, and contributing essentially to their comfort and happiness. The purity of her mind

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" stagger my faith in the goodness of God. *Though he kill*
" *me yet will I trust in him,* for were he not good, I must
" have been *wholly* evil. I cannot be better than my
" Maker: therefore whilst I feel *one spark* of benevolence
" in myself, I must attribute that quality to him in bound-
" less perfection. Upon the whole, I sincerely admire your
" work and venerate the author; most particularly for that
" unlimited charity and candour, which is the genuine spirit
" of Christianity."

Extract of a letter from Sir William Jones, dated Crishna Nagar, 26th September, 1788.

" I have lately read with delight a book in which all
" Christians are interested; a volume of Sermons preached
" by you, and showing the goodness both of your heart and
" of your judgement. I anxiously hope that I shall see
" you in perfect health some years hence on my return to
" Europe, where (despairing of public liberty) I shall, by
" God's blessing, pass the rest of my life in studying those
" parts of knowledge which are connected with the duty
" of good citizens, and in conversing with you and a few
" others who love their country better than their interest."

and the benevolence of her disposition had well fitted her to be the friend and companion of Dr. Price; and though their union was never blessed with an addition to their family, they were no less the objects of filial love and veneration to many of their younger relatives, whom they treated with all the care and kindness of the most affectionate parents. I do not know that in any part of Dr. Price's life the amiable benevolence of his temper shone with more lustre than during the last illness of Mrs. Price. The paralytic disorder with which she was affected, though slight in its first attack, had in the course of two years considerably impaired her faculties, and rendered her incapable of deriving much enjoyment either from reading or conversation. In order therefore, as far as lay in his power to contribute to her amusement, Dr. Price devoted a more than ordinary portion of his time to her company, and almost every afternoon sat down for an hour or two with

the utmost patience and even cheerfulness to play cards with her—a sacrifice which can be fully appreciated only by a mind like his own. Her death in September 1786, though long expected and by no means undesirable, was, however, as deeply felt, and as sincerely lamented by him, as if it had been preceded by no malady to reconcile him to her dissolution.—But he felt and lamented like a good man, and never suffered his sorrow to render him less cheerful to his friends, or less interested in the welfare and happiness of his fellow-creatures.

About this period the Trustees of Mr. Coward's Academy, where in the earlier part of his life he had received his education, determined to move that seminary from London to a distant part of the country. To this they were induced, partly perhaps by their own orthodoxy, but professedly by a scrupulous adherence to the construction of Coward's will, which direct-

ed that all the students in his institution should be instructed in the principles of Calvinism, or, in other words, in principles diametrically opposite to those which had been taught there for many preceding years. This determination of Coward's trustees deprived the more liberal and enlightened dissenters in London of the only place in which young men of their persuasion could be brought up for the ministry. Accordingly a meeting was held among some of the principal friends of rational religion, and a subscription was set on foot with the view of establishing a college in the neighbourhood of London, for the education not only of Clerical but of Lay-students. A very considerable sum was raised in a short time for this purpose. A stately edifice was purchased in Hackney, and tutors were appointed for the different branches of literature and philosophy. In support of an institution formed with such laudable views, Dr. Price not only contributed his

share in the subscription, but consented to instruct the students in the higher branches of the mathematics—a work, for which his mildness, patience, and ability, would have rendered him highly qualified, had his time been less occupied, and his habits more accustomed to the mechanical drudgery of education*. In addition to these services, he undertook, but with some reluctance, to preach a sermon at the opening of the academy in April 1787, and chose for his subject the evidence of a future improvement in the state of mankind. —Happy had his predictions been verified! or even had the prospect of this improvement been rendered more encouraging by the events of the last twenty years!—Of the Hackney institution it will be sufficient

* Dr. Price soon found himself incapable of attending to the duties of this office, and therefore resigned it in the second year after having undertaken it.—The wonder is, that he could ever be prevailed upon to undertake it at all.

to observe that it began its course with splendour, and flattered the hopes of its more sanguine friends and benefactors with the mighty effects it was to produce on the rising generation; but that it soon gradually languished and decayed; and after an inglorious existence of a few years, and the expenditure of more than £20,000, sunk into irretrievable ruin. Dr. Price, however, had not the mortification of witnessing this catastrophe. To the last period of his life he continued his unavailing assistance to the institution; and it is probable, from the circumstance of his having bequeathed a small legacy towards its support, that he died unconscious of the ignorance and folly which were accelerating its destruction.

I have already observed that the measures recommended by Lord Shelburne for redeeming the national debt and abandoned by his immediate successors, had been again adopted by the following Administra-

tion. For two or three years after the conclusion of the American war the funds continued much depressed, and the revenue inadequate to the ordinary expenses of government, arising principally from the immense amount of the unfunded debt, and from the injudicious system of taxation which had been pursued during the war. As the best means of restoring public credit, Mr. Pitt, the present minister, determined upon a new and more regular arrangement of the taxes, and upon forming a plan which should reduce the debt, and thus inspire the nation with a hope that its burthens were neither to increase, nor even to continue for ever. Amidst a great variety of plans which were proposed to the minister for this purpose, he at length decided in favour of one which, previous to its being carried into effect, he very properly submitted to the judgement of Dr. Price, accompanied with the following letter :—

"DEAR SIR,

"The subject of the papers which I in-
"close will, I am sure, be an apology
"for the liberty I take in troubling you,
"and in requesting your opinion upon
"them. When you have had sufficient
"leisure to consider them, I should be
"greatly obliged to you if you will allow
"me to hope for the pleasure of seeing you at
"any time that is convenient to you.—The
"situation of the revenue certainly makes
"this the time to establish an effectual
"sinking fund. The general idea of convert-
"ing the three-per-cents into a fund bear-
"ing a higher rate of interest, with a view to
"facilitate redemption, you have on many
"occasions suggested, and particularly in
"the papers you were so good to send me
"last year. The rise of the Stocks has
"made a material change since that period,
"and I am inclined to think something
"like the plan I now send you may be

"more adapted to the present circum-
"stances. There may be, I believe, some
"inaccuracies in the calculations, but not
"such as to be very material. Before I
"form any decisive opinion, I wish to learn
"your sentiments upon it; and shall think
"myself obliged to you for any improve-
"ment you can suggest, if you think the
"principle a right one; or for any other
"proposal, which from your knowledge of
"the subject you may think preferable."

Instead of bestowing much time in exposing this ineffective and miserable plan, which would have disgraced any minister that had adopted it, Dr. Price, in return, sent three other plans for Mr. Pitt's perusal; but recommended one of them in preference to the other two, as the most powerful in its operations, and consequently the best adapted to the present circumstances of the country. But this plan required the addition of £800,000 a year to the taxes,

and Mr. Pitt, good man (who afterwards added 500 millions to the public debt), scrupled to burthen the nation with this new load, and therefore adopted one of the less efficient plans, which however he contrived to render still more inefficient by providing that its operations should be checked at the period when they were becoming most powerful.—Nevertheless, the plan, though crippled and mutilated in the first instance by Mr. Pitt, and still further crippled by his successors, has produced the most beneficial effects, and entitled the author of it to the gratitude of the nation. I am far from denying his share of merit to the minister who had the discretion to adopt any measure of this kind, and whose influence was exerted in carrying this particular measure into execution. But the friends of Dr. Price have reason to complain that, after enduring so much obloquy and abuse from his stupid opponents when he first proposed such a measure, and after

a patient perseverance for fourteen years, having succeeded at last in convincing Government of the necessity of it, he should be deprived of the meagre boon of being *noticed* amidst the high-sounding compliments which the minister bestowed upon himself in proposing the measure to Parliament. When he boasted of having raised a pillar to public credit, it would have been as well if he had proposed to have Dr. Price's name inscribed with his own on the pedestal: but subsequent events have proved that these names would have been ill associated on the same column.—Dr. Price's plans were formed for the purpose of relieving the nation from its burthens. They were never designed for the purpose of forcing public credit to its utmost limits, or for being converted into instruments for increasing the mass of the debt to four times its former amount. Had he foreseen this to have been the consequence, it is probable that he would have been less

strenuous in the recommendation of them. The pure and disinterested motives which directed all his actions rendered him anxious only for the public good; and on this principle he was solicitous that Mr. Pitt, in the establishment of a measure so essential to it, should receive all the instruction and assistance in his power. He assumed no other merit to himself than that of honest intention; and therefore, when he imagined that the great end he had in view was about to be accomplished, he was very little moved by the vanity and ingratitude of the minister in depriving him of all share in the praise and honour of it. The successors of Mr. Pitt have in this respect uniformly followed his example in their panegyrics on their great prototype. They have never ceased to extol his virtue in establishing the Sinking Fund, and to ascribe solely to his wisdom and ability the formation of the plan which has given so much energy to the operations of it. Whether this has

proceeded from ignorance, or a disregard to truth and decency, I am little disposed to inquire; but it is with sincere regret that I observe in the number of these successors one Minister who should have been more discriminate in his praises of Mr. Pitt on this subject. Lord Henry Petty, when Chancellor of the Exchequer, should have known that his late father in the House of Peers had on more than one occasion asserted Dr. Price's claim to the gratitude of the public; and instead of passing over his name in silence when expatiating on the benefits of the Sinking Fund, and ascribing the merits of it exclusively to Mr. Pitt, he should at least have admitted Dr. Price to a share in his panegyrics, and thus paid a tribute to the memory of a man whom his father had long been accustomed to address and treat as his friend. But I do not believe that Lord Henry Petty intended any disrespect to Dr. Price by his silence; nor in itself was it a matter of much consequence

that on this occasion he should have imitated the example of Mr. Pitt and his followers. It would, however, have been as well, if, while extolling the virtue which introduced and the wisdom which formed the plan for redeeming the national debt, he had chosen to give fresh energy to its operations, rather than divert them to other purposes, and instead of making the first inroad upon a fund which ought to have been held sacred and inviolate, he had guarded it by more powerful securities against the encroachments of future Ministers.—But, unfortunately, his successors have profited by the example to make further inroads upon it in aid of that enormous expenditure which, after having exhausted the ordinary resources of the country, is now gradually destroying the last support of its credit and security. It is melancholy to observe the indifference, or rather the complacency, with which this fatal measure is regarded by the nation. They suffer themselves to be de-

luded by the temporary relief which they derived from the appropriation of the Sinking Fund to the immediate exigencies of Government, and are thus led to acquiesce in a continued course of extravagance which must ultimately oppress and overwhelm them.

In his ardent zeal for the establishment of this fund Dr. Price does not appear to have duly reflected on the fate of a similar measure in the former reign. The existence of a fund which chiefly depends on the frugality and forbearance of ministers must always be very precarious; and unless succeeding ministers should become more saving and virtuous than their predecessors, it is in vain to hope that any establishment of this kind will long be suffered to proceed without interruption in those seasons of difficulty which have so often been produced by an improvident expenditure of the public money.—The accumulations of a Sinking Fund afford a ready supply for an ex-

hausted Treasury; and since the danger of their being misapplied will always increase with their magnitude, it is not probable, if we reason from past experience, that they will ever be permitted to proceed so far as to produce their full effect in exonerating the country from its burthens. In short, it is of little consequence what plan is adopted for redeeming the public debts if an unsparing profusion perpetually augments them; and whether the merit of such plan be assigned to Dr. Price or to Mr. Pitt, the nation in this case will have to regard the author only as having furnished ministers with the means of extending the bounds of public credit, and thus rendering its ruin ultimately more general and dreadful.

Dr. Price's acquaintance with Mr. Pitt, as well as his publications on the subject of the national debt, were closed with the establishment of the Sinking Fund in 1786. Had he lived, however, it was his inten-

tion to have given an account of the public finances for the four succeeding years*, in order to prove that the ordinary revenue, so far from providing a million surplus for that fund, as Mr. Pitt pretended, had been deficient to a greater amount; and that such million had in fact been derived from loans, extraordinary receipts, and other means which would probably fail in future†, and leave the country in a worse state than if the Sinking Fund had never been established.—How far this might have been the case, had the nation continued in a state of peace, it is difficult to determine: but the long and expensive wars in which it has been engaged have rendered these speculations of little consequence; nor have they any connexion either with the life or the

* In the fifth edition of his Observations on Reversionary Payments, which he had just begun to prepare for the press at the time of his last illness in 1791.

† This work I endeavoured to supply in a pamphlet which I published soon after Dr. Price's death, containing a Review of his different writings on the public finances.

writings of Dr. Price, who never could have contemplated a debt of 800 millions; or, if he had lived to witness it, would long ago have ceased in despair to propose any plan for its redemption.

The death of Mrs. Price, the declining state of his own health, and the growing infirmities of age, had tended greatly to depress Dr. Price's spirits, and to alienate his mind from all political subjects. With a disposition naturally grave and serious, it is no wonder that in this season of sorrow and affliction he should choose to fix his thoughts on objects from which he was more likely to derive comfort than from the fruitless attempt to reform the abuses of a corrupt Administration. To the duties of his profession, which however he was used to lament as having become too burthensome for him, he wished to devote the principal part of his time at this period. The sermons which he had preached and approved in his youth no longer satisfied the

more severe judgement of his maturer years, and he thought that he could not be better employed than in correcting or new composing them, as they appeared to him to be more or less capable of amendment. It was his intention therefore, if his life should be spared, to select a sufficient number to form a single volume, and to close his labours with the publication of them.—But this intention was never fulfilled. The numerous acquaintance and extensive correspondence which occupied so much of his time, and which he was in the constant habit of bewailing as the greatest impediment to his literary pursuits, had now increased so considerably as to become a very serious evil to him, and made it less a matter of surprise than regret, that in the depressed state of his mind he should not have been able to accomplish this purpose.

After a residence of near thirty years in Newington Green, Dr. Price, in the spring of the year 1787, exchanged his quiet

abode in that place for another more public and much less agreeable to himself in the neighbouring village of Hackney. The dilapidated state of his house—the resignation of his office as minister to the congregation—the death of the greater number of those members who had long been his most intimate friends—and more especially the hope that a change of scene might divert his thoughts from the sorrowful recollection of the loss which he had lately sustained in his own family,—all concurred in overcoming his partiality for his old dwelling, and determined him with much reluctance to move from it. At this time indeed every exertion was painful to him, and he seemed to be almost as much oppressed by a dread of the trouble attending his removal, as by his sorrow at quitting a place where he had enjoyed so many hours of comfort and happiness. In a few weeks, however, after he had been settled in his new habitation, his widow-sister, Mrs.

Morgan, who from her birth had resided in Wales, but whose affection for her brother was not lessened by the distance which had always separated them, came to live with him at Hackney, and to take upon herself the management of his household concerns. It was her most ardent wish, by the exercise of every kind attention, to soothe the cares and sorrows of his life; nor was it possible that he could have had a friend more dear to him, nor better fitted, by the benevolence of her disposition, to render him happy. Dr. Price had never enjoyed a strong constitution, nor had the return of more than threescore years tended to improve it.—Hitherto, however, by a simple and regular course of life—by an unvaried attention to the use of moderate exercise—and by cultivating that meek and tranquil temper of mind, which suffers itself neither to be inflamed by resentment nor disquieted by the cares of the world, he had so far preserved his health as to be seldom inter-

rupted by sickness, either in the pursuit of his studies or in the discharge of his public duties.—But no effort of human wisdom or virtue will always avail in keeping our bodies from decay. The strongest constitution must yield at last to the ravages of time; and therefore it is not surprising that the feeble frame of Dr. Price, though fostered with ever so much care and prudence, should feel the effects of them. For more than forty years of his life he had been accustomed to ride an hour or two every day before dinner, and three or four times in the week to use the cold bath, which had always been of particular service to him. But a complaint in his head attended with the loss of the sense of smelling prevented him from enjoying the benefit of this recreation, and a constant pain in his back extending down his right leg, with other symptoms which too plainly marked the nature of his disease to be mistaken, rendered him incapable of taking his favourite

exercise on horseback, or even of walking to any great distance without much difficulty.—These privations soon began to have a very serious effect on his health and spirits. He now regarded himself as declining fast into the vale of years, and considered those maladies as monitors to warn him of the necessity of closing his labours and retiring from the world.—But on this head his apprehensions were altogether unfounded, and could have arisen only from the humble opinion which he entertained of his own abilities. The disorders of his body, however much they might have depressed his spirits, never had the least effect in impairing the faculties of his mind. These remained to the latest period of his life in their full vigour, and it will be seen that on proper occasions they were still capable of being exerted with all their wonted force and energy.

The death of our friends is one of those severe trials which awaits us all, but more

especially when our lives are prolonged to the period which Dr. Price had now attained. The associates of his earlier years were successively dropping into the grave, and the natural depression of his spirits rendered him more susceptible of the effects of these afflictions. To the long list which he enumerates in his private memoirs on this occasion, he mentions with particular sorrow and affection the death of Dr. Shipley, the bishop of St. Asaph, and of Dr. Adams, the master of Pembroke-college Oxford, whom he had long esteemed for their virtues, and numbered among the most valued of his friends. Entertaining the same liberal opinions in religion and politics, it is no wonder that these excellent men should be endeared to each other, and that a friendship founded on the union of such principles should have endured to the end of their lives. In the month of December, 1788, Dr. Adams, whose age and infirmities led him to anticipate the events which were

soon to follow, closed a friendly correspondence which had been continued for many years with a most affecting letter—in which he informs him that his own life is drawing fast towards a close; and after encouraging him to persevere in those labours which he had invariably exerted in promoting the best interests of mankind, he concludes with expressing a hope that their friendship, which had so long been cultivated to their mutual happiness in this world, might be renewed and continued for ever in a better.

Dr. Adams did not live many days after writing this letter; nor did he leave a friend to survive him, more sincerely grieved at his death than the person to whom it was addressed. His acquaintance with Dr. Price commenced in the year 1757, and arose from the publication of Dr. Price's Review of the principal questions in morals, in which the same account is given of the nature of virtue and moral obligations, with

the account given by himself in a sermon which he had formerly published. But it was not merely on the subject of morals that they were agreed in opinion. From the whole of their long correspondence it appears that they were equally well agreed on subjects of more interest, which unhappily have too often divided and embittered the minds of Christians against each other.

Not many months after the death of these two friends, Dr. Price had to lament the loss of another, in the amiable and benevolent Mr. Howard, who died a martyr to the great cause of humanity, to which he had so long and so nobly devoted his time and fortune. With him he had lived from his earlier years on terms of the most intimate friendship and affection; and on all occasions was consulted by him with an ingenuous confidence which belongs only to virtuous minds. In all his visits to the different prisons in Great Britain, in Ireland, and on the continent of Europe, this good

man never failed to communicate an account of his labours to Dr. Price, and to submit to his inspection and judgement the invaluable works which contained the results of those labours, before they were given to the public. The numerous letters which were written by each of them during an intimacy of so many years would be very improperly introduced into this work. Perhaps, however, the following letter, the last which Mr. Howard ever wrote to Dr. Price, may not be uninteresting, as it serves to give some idea of the kind and benevolent spirit which pervades throughout the whole of their correspondence.

"*Moscow, September 22nd,* 1789.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"YOUR kind desire of hearing from me "engages me to write. When I left Eng- "land I first stopped at Amsterdam.—I "proceeded to Osnaburgh, Hanover, Bruns- "wick, and Berlin, then to Koningsburgh, "Riga, and Petersburgh; at all which places

"I visited the prisons and hospitals, which "were all flung open to me, and in some "the burgo-masters accompanied me into "the dungeons as well as into the other "rooms of confinement. I arrived a few "days ago in this city, and have begun my "rounds.—The hospitals are in a sad state. "—Upwards of seventy thousand sailors "and recruits died last year in the hospi-"tals. I labour to convey the torch of "philanthropy into these distant regions, "as in God's hand no instrument is weak, "and in whose presence no flesh must "glory.

"I go through Poland into Hungary.—"I hope to have a few nights of this moon "in my journey to Warsaw, which is about "one thousand miles.—I am pure well—"the weather clear—the mornings fresh "—thermometer 48°, but have not yet "begun fires. I wish for a mild winter, "and shall then make some progress in my "European expedition.

"My medical acquaintance give me but "little hopes of escaping the plague in "Turkey; but my spirits do not at all fail "me, and indeed I do not look back, but "would readily endure any hardships and "encounter any dangers to be an honour "to my Christian profession.—I long to "hear from my friend, yet I know not "*where* he can direct to me, unless at Sir "Robert Ainslie's, Constantinople.—I will "hope all things.—Remember me to sister, "nieces, and Mr. Morgan.—I am, my much "esteemed friend, most affectionately and "sincerely yours,

"JOHN HOWARD."

To this letter Dr. Price returned an answer directed to Constantinople.—But, alas! Mr. Howard never arrived there to receive it. After having braved contagion in all the loathsome dungeons in his own and other countries, and exposed himself even to the ravages of the plague in Turkey and

Asia Minor; he was at last seized at Cherson in the Crimea with a putrid fever, which after twelve days sickness terminated his usefulness in this world, and raised him to a nobler state of existence in a better.

This period appears to have been particularly fatal to those who had longest shared in the friendship and esteem of Dr. Price. In a few months after having received an account of Mr. Howard's death, a letter from Dr. Rush of Philadelphia conveyed to him the same mournful account of the venerable Dr. Franklin. His advanced age, and the painful disorder under which he had laboured, had long prepared his friends for the decease of that illustrious philosopher. But Dr. Price was not the less affected by an event, however much anticipated, which added one more to the number of those deaths which had lately so often embittered his sorrows. His views, however, of the progressive state of knowledge and virtue in the world, served to increase his affection

for his surviving friends, and afforded him a consolation under his afflictions which Dr. Franklin, towards the close of his life, does not appear to have possessed. The following letter, being the last he ever wrote to Dr. Price, seems to have been written under a depression of mind which led him to entertain a very unfavourable opinion of those he was to leave behind him.

"*Philadelphia, May 31st*, 1789.

"MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,

"I lately received your kind letter in-
"closing one from Miss Kitty Shipley in-
"forming me of the good Bishop's decease,
"which afflicted me greatly. My friends
"drop off one after another, when my age
"and infirmities prevent my making new
"ones; and if I still retained the necessary
"activity and ability, I hardly see among
"the rising generation where I could make
"them of equal goodness; so that the longer

"I live I must expect to be more wretched.
"As we draw nearer the conclusion of life,
"Nature furnishes us with more helps to
"wean us from it,—among which one of
"the most powerful is the loss of such dear
"friends.

"My best wishes attend you, being ever,
"with a sincere and great esteem, my dear
"friend, yours most affectionately,

"B. FRANKLIN."

This gloomy view of the future race of mankind has in all times been the common failing of old age: and who shall say, if the snows of more than fourscore winters should whiten his head, that he will be exempted from it? But it should be recollected that this letter was written by Dr. Franklin when a severe disorder was hastening the dissolution of his frame, and rendering him less susceptible of pleasure from any external object. In his last moments, however, his

mind exhibited no symptoms of decay, and he left the world with the same cheerfulness and composure as he had always lived in it *.

* In Dr. Rush's letter, to which I have already alluded, the following account is given of Dr. Franklin's death:

"*Philadelphia, April 24th*, 1790.

"DEAR SIR,

"—— The papers will inform you of the death of our "late illustrious friend Dr. Franklin.—The evening of his "life was marked by the same activity of his moral and in- "tellectual powers which distinguished its meridian. Three "days before he died he dictated a letter upon very im- "portant business relative to the boundaries of the United "States to Mr. Jefferson, and three weeks before his death "he wrote and published a very agreeable and ingenious "parody upon a speech of a Member of Congress in favour "of the slavery of the Africans. His conversation with his "family upon the subject of his dissolution was free and "cheerful.—A few days before he died he rose from his "bed, and begged that it might be made up for him, so "that he might die in *a decent manner*. His daughter told "him that she hoped he would recover, and live many "years longer. He calmly replied '*He hoped not.*' Upon "being advised to change his position in bed that he might "breathe *easy*, he said, '*A dying man can do nothing easy.*' "His will has extended his benevolence beyond the grave. "He has left 1,000*l.* to the City of Boston, and the same

Of all the events which distinguished Dr. Price's life, none interested or agitated him so much as the French revolution. This at the first moment of its explosion

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" sum to the City of Philadelphia. That to our city is to
" be put out on compound interest for fifteen years, and
" afterwards to be applied to supply the inhabitants with
" water by means of aqueducts; for before that time he
" predicted that the water at present obtained from pumps,
" will be so much contaminated by the increase of offal
" matters in our city as to be unwholesome. The re-
" mainder of his estate he has bequeathed to his daughter
" and grandson, excepting from it only a legacy to his
" sister in Boston, and all his lands in Nova Scotia to his
" son, Governor Franklin, now in London.

" All orders and bodies of people among us have vied
" with each other in paying tributes of respect to his me-
" mory. The Philosophical Society, of which he was Pre-
" sident, have ordered a funeral oration to be delivered in
" honour of his illustrious character. Even the Govern-
" ment of the United States have shared in the general
" sympathy, agreeing to wear mourning for one month for
" him, and thus proclaiming to the world that republicans
" are not deficient in gratitude to those who have deserved
" well of their country by their wisdom and virtue.

" I had like to have forgotten to mention that he desired
" in his will that the elegant epitaph (suggested by his
" original occupation) which he composed for himself some

raised his hopes to the highest point, and brightened all his prospects of the future improvement and happiness of mankind; and the gratification which he had often

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" years ago, should be inscribed upon his tomb-stone. By " this request he has declared his belief in the Christian " doctrine of a resurrection.

" From, my dear Sir, yours sincerely,

" BENJAMIN RUSH."

It does not appear from this account that Dr. Franklin's equanimity arose from his belief in a future state; and some have even suspected that the epitaph which he wrote for himself was intended rather to display his wit than to prove his faith in the doctrine which it inculcated. But his private letters, and especially those which he wrote in his later years, which could never be intended for such a display, remove every suspicion of this kind. It may perhaps be true that his creed did not include the whole of the Old Testament—a scepticism by no means peculiar to Unbelievers. As to his faith in the New Testament, he acknowledges in his correspondence with Dr. Price some years before his death, that he had never hitherto examined the evidences of Christianity, but that he fully intended to consider the subject with all the care and attention which its importance required. I can find no traces of the effect of this examination in his subsequent letters, and it is not improbable that, like Festus the Roman governor, he always continued to put it off to a more convenient season.

enjoyed in reflecting on the active part he had taken in the American war, was now still further increased, from considering the present revolution to have been produced by the successful issue of that contest. On the subject of this stupendous event, so auspicious in its beginning—so dreadful in its progress—the opinions of a great majority of the nation were in unison with those of Dr. Price; and even the Ministry for a moment seemed to join in the general exultation. But the fervour of their joy was soon succeeded by feelings of a very different kind, and afforded little to encourage the hopes of those who participated with Dr. Price in the triumph of French liberty—a triumph, short indeed and transitory, but, happily for him, obscured during the remainder of his life by no clouds to darken his prospect, or to chill the ardour with which he fondly hoped to extend and perpetuate its blessings to all the nations of the earth. Having never had the mortification

to witness those sanguinary and atrocious deeds which disgraced, and ultimately overturned the revolution, the circumstances of his life can have no connexion with them, and consequently the recital of those deeds (at all times painful and disgusting) would be particularly improper on the present occasion.

During the first and second years of its progress Dr. Price exerted himself in a very conspicuous manner; and even before it burst forth to astonish the world, he was by no means an indifferent spectator of the events which were preparing the way for it. From his correspondence with Mr. Jefferson, at that time the American ambassador at Paris, it appears that he was well informed of the difficulties of the French government, and of the very imprudent measures with which it was attempted to surmount them *. The last letter, however, which he

* In these letters a particular account is given of the proceedings of government, and of the successive assem-

received from Mr. Jefferson, though written only four days previous to the destruction of the Bastile, did not lessen his astonishment at the first intelligence of that convulsion, or dispose him to think it possible that a despotism of eight centuries, supported by an immense army, could be overthrown by the tumultuous populace of the city of Paris. But when the stability of the revolution appeared to be confirmed by subsequent events, his former apprehensions gave way to the most sincere joy, and he became so anxious to receive the earliest accounts of the proceedings in France, that he could hardly be prevailed upon to con-

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blies of the Notables and States-general, and also a judicious conjecture of the probable issue of the disputes between the Court, the Clergy, the Noblesse, and the Tiers-Etats. But subsequent events having long ago either fulfilled or falsified these conjectures, and the subject itself affording but little consolation to the friends of peace and liberty, I shall not prolong the discussion of it by inserting those letters, however interesting they may have been when written by Mr. Jefferson.

tinue his wonted time in Wales (whither he had gone in the month of August as usual for the benefit of sea-bathing) rather than hasten back to London in order that he might be nearer to the source of intelligence. On his return from the country he was solicited by several of the friends of freedom to preach on the approaching anniversary of the English revolution, which it was intended to celebrate with more than usual festivity, in order to testify their joy on account of the late glorious events in the neighbouring kingdom. Though he declined a similar application in the preceding year, which being the hundredth anniversary of the revolution had also been celebrated in a very distinguished manner; yet on this occasion he appears for a moment to have forgotten that depression of spirits which he had then urged as an excuse for his non-compliance, and was persuaded to engage in a work on which he afterwards reflected with great anxiety,

under the apprehension that neither his strength nor his abilities were equal to the accomplishment of it.—In this, however, he was happily mistaken. The importance of the subject seemed to have animated him with new spirits, nor did he ever exert his talents in the great cause of liberty with more energy and effect than on that occasion. While delivering his discourse to an overflowing congregation, and expatiating with irresistible eloquence on the brilliant prospects which now illumined the benighted nations of Europe, such was the ardour and enthusiasm with which he inspired his auditors, that they could hardly be restrained by the sacredness of the place from bursting into open shouts of applause. But in the midst of all this rapture to which his congregation were transported, he was himself in considerable bodily pain, and often apprehended that he should not be able to proceed with the service. Happily, however, he continued his exertions with an

energy apparently unabated to the conclusion of it; nor were any but his nearest friends acquainted with the severe trial to which his zeal and fortitude had just been exposed. Immediately on his return home, the pain and fatigue entirely overpowered his spirits, and it was some hours before the utmost attention of his friends could afford him any relief.—But so ardent were his wishes to avail himself of every opportunity of supporting the cause, and extending the happy effects of the French revolution, that he exerted himself, though still weak and languid, to attend the dinner that day at the London Tavern to move a Congratulatory Address to the National Assembly *, which

* At the Anniversary Meeting of the Society for commemorating the Revolution in GREAT BRITAIN, held at the London Tavern, November 4th, 1789, Dr. Price moved, and it was unanimously resolved, that the following *Congratulatory Address* to the National Assembly of FRANCE be transmitted to them, signed by the chairman:—

"The Society for commemorating the Revolution in "GREAT BRITAIN, disdaining national partialities, and re-

was received and adopted with the warmest approbation and unanimity; and it was resolved that it should be transmitted by the chairman, Earl Stanhope, to the Duke de la Rochfoucauld to be presented by him to the Assembly. In compliance also with the unanimous request of the company, he consented to the publication of his Sermon, which on its appearance in print was immediately read and admired with a fervour little inferior to that with which it

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"joicing in every triumph of liberty and justice over ar-
"bitrary power, offer to the National Assembly of FRANCE
"their congratulations on the Revolution in that country,
"and on the prospect it gives to the two first kingdoms in
"the world, of a common participation in the blessings of
"civil and religious liberty.

"They cannot help adding their ardent wishes of a hap-
"py settlement of so important a Revolution, and at the
"same time expressing the particular satisfaction with
"which they reflect on the tendency of the glorious ex-
"ample given in FRANCE to encourage other nations to
"assert the unalienable rights of mankind, and thereby to
"introduce a general reformation in the governments of
"EUROPE, and to make the world free and happy."

had been heard in the Old Jewry.—In an appendix to this sermon were inserted the answer of the National Assembly to the Congratulatory Address of the Society, together with letters of thanks from the different patriotic bodies in France—all of them breathing the purest sentiments of liberty, but now rendered of too little interest to form a part of this history, even if they had not already been given to the public.

The hopes and expectations of the friends of freedom at this time appear to have been raised to an extraordinary height, and particularly those of Dr. Price. Nay, so well assured was he of the establishment of a free constitution in France, and of the subsequent overthrow of despotism throughout Europe as the consequence of it, that he never failed to express his gratitude to Heaven for having extended his life to the present happy period, in which "after "sharing the benefits of one revolution, he "had been spared to be a witness to two

"other revolutions, both glorious." But some of his correspondents were not quite so sanguine in their expectations from the last of these revolutions; and among these the late American ambassador, Mr. John Adams. In a long letter which he wrote to Dr. Price at this time, so far from congratulating him on the occasion, he expresses himself in terms of contempt in regard to the French revolution; and after asking rather too severely what good was to be expected from a nation of atheists, he concludes with foretelling the destruction of a million of human beings as the probable consequence of it. These harsh censures and gloomy predictions were particularly ungrateful to Dr. Price; nor can it be denied that they must have then appeared as the effusions of a splenetic mind, rather than as the sober reflections of an unbiassed understanding. From the numerous letters which he was continually receiving from some of the most enlighten-

ed and respectable persons in France*, as well as from the general tenor of their proceedings in the National Assembly, Dr. Price had every reason to entertain a very different opinion from that of Mr. Adams. Their resolutions in favour of civil and religious liberty—their declared wish to cooperate with England in cultivating the arts of peace, and preserving the tranquil-

* Extract of a letter from M. Rabaut de St. Etienne,

"——— There is an object still more important on which "I wish to engage your attention.—For some years past it "has been warmly insisted on by thinking minds, that an "alliance between England and France was the true policy "of both countries. The appearance of war between Eng- "land and Spain has turned the attention of the French to "this object, and I behold with pleasure the increase of "this opinion.—When, indeed, there were in France only "a master and his slaves, neither one nor the other could "have hoped for such an alliance, nor depended on its so- "lidity.—But the maxims of the National Assembly are "well known to you—These maxims are now become con- "stitutional, and our nation has thought that it owes to the "rights of the people, the same respect that individuals "ought to have for the rights of each other.—An alliance "with such a nation, it appears to me, would be a contract

lity of Europe, led him to cherish the hope that religion, being freed from the superstition and tyranny by which it had long been disgraced, would henceforward destroy infidelity, and perpetuate the peace and harmony of the world. While indulging in this hope, he was naturally interested in the scenes which were now passing in France; and therefore it is no wonder that

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" with virtue.—Such an alliance would constitute the hap-
" piness of two nations, who in the midst of hostilities
" esteemed each other.—You would find great resources
" in the diminution of your armaments. We should reap
" great advantages from such a union, and Europe would
" be compelled to enter into this immense vortex, &c. &c.
" Your Lord Chatham has said, *Peace with France and war*
" *with all Europe;* we might then say, that *peace between*
" *England and France would give peace to Europe.*"

The letters from the Duke de la Rochefoucauld, Messrs. Le Roy, Keralio, &c., all breathe the same spirit: but it is now of little use to insert them, as they would serve only to increase our sorrow, in reflecting that most of those good men were the first victims of the atrocious cruelties of a revolution which had begun with such favourable auspices, and which they had vainly hoped to have rendered a blessing to themselves and the world.

he should avail himself of every opportunity of acquiring an intimate knowledge of the characters which were the principal movers of them. In consequence of the active part which he had taken in the present revolution, he necessarily became acquainted with most of the French patriots who visited this country, and was constantly in the habit either of meeting them abroad, or entertaining them at his own house. From the liberal principles of government which they displayed in their conversation, he derived every encouragement to hope for the ultimate success of their cause, and thus to excite him to further exertions in support of it.

On the 14th of July, 1790, it was determined to celebrate the first Anniversary of the Revolution by inviting the friends of liberty to dine together at the Crown and Anchor Tavern in the Strand; and Dr. Price consented to officiate as one of the stewards on the occasion.—Having himself

given a short account of this dinner in a private letter to the Duke de la Rochefoucauld, I do not know that a better idea can be conveyed of the meeting, and the spirit with which it was conducted, than by the insertion of that part of his letter which refers to it.

"Our feast on the 14th of July was very "animating, and I think with satisfaction "on the concern I had in calling together "the friends of the Revolution in France "to testify on that day their joy. This "meeting has, I find, in France been mis-"taken for a meeting of our Revolutionary "Society. But the members of this So-"ciety made but an inconsiderable part of "that company, and it is probable that "they will make but an inconsiderable part "of the company that will attend our an-"nual feast on the 4th of November next, "for commemorating the British Revolu-"tion. Earl Stanhope has been the chair-"man, and I hope he will continue to be

"so; but the Society has at present no "fixed president. It is, however, now in- "creasing, and it will, I hope, in time be- "come sufficiently respectable to deserve "the notice with which your Society of "1789 has honoured it."

The notice taken in France of the speech made by Dr. Price in prefacing his toast at this dinner, and the principles laid down in the discourse which he had delivered at the Old Jewry in November, drew torrents of abuse upon him from Mr. Edmund Burke, who, as if possessed by some dæmon of the nether regions, had never ceased from the first moment of the revolution to declaim in a manner the most outrageous against it, and against all the friends and supporters of it. The phantoms which his own disordered imagination had raised to alarm and inflame the members of the House of Commons, unhappily succeeded too well in misleading the more timid and lukewarm friends of liberty, and thus, by

detaching them from their more steady associates, served to encourage Ministers to a more open avowal of their hostility, and to the prosecution of measures which otherwise they would never have dared to propose. But Dr. Price was spared the mortification of beholding Great Britain leagued with the despotic sovereigns of Europe in their attempts to crush the rising liberties of France, or of witnessing the devastation and carnage which have desolated the world for the last twenty years.

As to the rancorous invectives of Mr. Burke, which he had poured fourth in a volume of 400 pages, it neither disturbed the tranquillity of his mind, nor had any other effect than convincing him that the violent passions of the author had deranged his understanding; and what other opinion could be formed of a man, who in bewailing the French revolution seriously lamented that "*the age of chivalry is gone*—that *the glory of Europe is extinguished for*

ever—that *the unbought grace of life, the cheap defence of nations, the nurse of manly sentiment and heroic enterprise, is gone!*" Such indeed was the inveterate antipathy of Mr. Burke to the French revolution, that in the paroxysm of his rage he denies even the principles on which the English revolution was established.—These, Dr. Price observes, consist of the three following:—

"First, the right to liberty of conscience "in religious matters.—Secondly, the right "to resist power when abused.—And Third-"ly, the right to choose our own governors, "to cashier them for misconduct, and to "frame a government for ourselves.

"On these three principles, and more "especially the last, was the Revolution "founded. Were it not true that liberty "of conscience is a sacred right; that "power abused justifies resistance; and "that civil authority is a delegation from "the people:—were not all this true; the "Revolution would have been, not an *As-*

" *sertion*, but an *Invasion* of rights; not a " *Revolution* but a *Rebellion* *." To these self-evident truths Mr. Burke opposes the most unqualified abuse—denies that any such right as that of choosing its governors, or cashiering them for misconduct, exists in the nation—and has the hardihood to declare " that the people of England utterly " disclaim it, and will resist the practical " assertion of it with their lives and for- " tunes;" that is, they will sacrifice their lives and fortunes, not to maintain their rights, but to maintain that they have *no* rights. This is truly a paradox worthy of the author, and exceeded only by the greater paradox of the Government's having pensioned him for traducing the principles on which it is founded.

After all the horrors of the late revolution, and the numerous vices and cruelties with which it has been disgraced, it is some

* See Discourse on the Love of our Country, page 34.

consolation to the friends of freedom, to find those principles recognised by the very potentates who, at the beginning of this revolution, had armed for their extermination. When the allied Monarchs had entered within the walls of Paris, they had been taught by dire experience to acknowledge that the people had the *power* as well as the right to choose and cashier their rulers. Instead therefore of dictating to the French people the form of their new government, or insisting on the restoration of their old one, they found it necessary to make the following declaration, disclaiming in the most unequivocal manner any interference of that kind:—

"The armies of the allied powers have "occupied the capital of France.—The "allied sovereigns receive favourably the "wish of the French nation.—They de- "clare, that if the conditions of peace "ought to contain stronger guarantees

"when the question was to bind down the "ambition of Buonaparté, they may be "more favourable when, by a return to a "wise government, France herself offers "the assurance of this repose.

"The Sovereigns proclaim in conse- "quence that they will no more treat with "Napoleon Buonaparté, nor with any of "his family.

"That they respect the integrity of an- "cient France as it existed under its legi- "timate * kings. They may even do more, "because they profess it as a principle, that,

* This reference to the *legitimate kings* of France seems to imply, that the allied powers never recognised that country otherwise than as a *kingdom*, and therefore that they regarded its government, during the last twenty-four years, as *illegitimate*.—But how does this accord with their Declaration from Frankfort on the 1st of December, in which they announce that "Victory having conducted their ar- "mies to the banks of the Rhine, the first use which their "Imperial and Royal Majesties have made of that Victory, "has been to offer peace to HIS MAJESTY THE EMPEROR "OF THE FRENCH, and that the conditions of that peace are "founded on the independence of the *French* EMPIRE," &c.

" for the happiness of Europe, France must
" be great and strong.

" *That they will recognise and guaranty*
" *the Constitution which France shall adopt.*
" *—They therefore invite the Senate to*
" *name immediately a Provisional Govern-*
" *ment, which may provide for the wants*
" *of the Administration, and prepare the*
" *Constitution which shall suit the French*
" *people.*

" The intentions which I have just ex-
" pressed are common to *all* the Allied
" Powers.

" (Signed) ALEXANDER.

" *Paris, March* 31*st*, 1814.
" *Three o'clock in the afternoon.*"

What has Dr. Price said, or what has he contended for, more than is conceded in this declaration? No longer then let the servile and pensioned advocates of power traduce the memory of this virtuous man. —No longer let them profanely dare to assert the right of kings to be divine, or de-

rived from any other source than the free consent and suffrages of the people.—Here we behold the greatest sovereigns of Europe compelled to acknowledge those rights which Burke had so peremptorily denied, and a Monarch whose ancestors had reigned over France for more than 800 years, raised to the throne, not on the ground of inheritance and indefeasible right, but under a new and solemn compact, founded on the unalienable rights of the people to choose their own form of government and to appoint those whom they should think fit to preside over it. Had Dr. Price lived to witness these scenes, it would probably have given him some pleasure to see his own principles established on the ruins of those of his great reviler; but it would have been a pleasure embittered by so much pain and mortification, that perhaps it has been happier for him to have quitted the world in the early period of the revolution, than to have survived those atrocious crimes

which have stained the annals of Europe for the last twenty years.

With his stewardship at the Commemoration-dinner, on the 14th of July, terminated the *public* exertions of Dr. Price in support of civil and religious liberty. In the beginning of August he took his usual excursion to the sea-coast near Newton in Glamorganshire, where he had been accustomed to spend a few weeks in the summer among his relatives with much benefit to his health and spirits. In this retired situation he had now determined to employ his leisure hours in writing some memoirs of his own life, with the view of prefixing them to the additional volume of sermons which he had so long intended to publish. But though he continued his stay beyond his usual time in the country, he appears to have made no further progress in this work than just to write an imperfect sketch of the more important events of his latter years; and to form the plan which he meant to

adopt in giving a more ample detail of them. On his return to London in the month of October, he expressed himself to have passed his time very happily in the country, but lamented his growing infirmities and total unfitness for any work that required either time or attention. The complaint in his leg, which he attributed to rheumatism, but afterwards proved to be the symptom of a more fatal disorder, still continued to deprive him of his usual exercise, and in consequence to increase the natural depression of his spirits. During the following winter, therefore, he became more and more indisposed to engage in his former literary pursuits, so that he neither resumed the history of his own life, nor the correction of those sermons with which he had intended to close the labours of it.—Some of his friends had urged him to reply to Mr. Burke's late publication; but at this period his spirits were not equal to the task, even if he had thought it necessary to en-

gage in it. He added, however, a few notes to the last edition of his discourse *On the Love of our Country*, in answer to some of those despotic principles of Burke which had long been exploded by the more enlightened part of mankind, but never deigned to defend his own principles, or to notice the abusive language with which they had been assailed.

In one respect Dr. Price differed essentially from his friend Dr. Priestley. When engaged in one pursuit, he never could apply his mind properly to any other; and this will in some measure account for his not having proceeded either with his memoirs or sermons after his return from the country. The Fourth Edition of his Treatise on *Reversionary Payments*, which he always considered as one of the most important of his works, had for some time been out of print; and being much importuned to publish a new edition without delay, and wishing to enlarge and improve

some parts of it, he directed his principal attention to it during the course of the following winter. But even here his progress was very slow, extending only to a few remarks in an imperfect state, and of use only as they serve to show what he intended to have done if he had lived to accomplish his purpose. Before the first volume was printed off, in which he had made no alterations of any consequence, his labours ceased and the completion of this work devolved upon myself—a task, which having been twice repeated since that period, proves the value of the work, and the high estimation in which it is held by the public. Though less fitted for his former literary pursuits, Dr. Price continued to discharge his duties as a minister with little or no interruption. In the beginning of February, 1791, he attended the funeral of a friend to Bunhill-fields without feeling much inconvenience from being exposed to the air in that cold season of the year, though he observed on

his return that "this method of conducting "funerals was the sure way of sending the "living after the dead." In the course of a month he attended the remains of another friend to the same place, and on this occasion the event unfortunately proved the truth of his late observation. Having staid some time to speak over the grave with no effectual covering to secure him from the inclemency of the weather, he was seized in the afternoon with shivering and other symptoms of fever, which on the following day increased so much as to render it necessary to have recourse to medical assistance. His disorder, however, did not appear to be very alarming, and had so far abated in the course of about ten days as to enable him to ride out in a carriage for the benefit of the air, by which he expressed himself to be so much refreshed, that his friends were encouraged to entertain the fond hope of his speedy and complete recovery.—But, alas! this hope was soon dis-

pelled—other symptoms succeeded to those of his first disorder, which, if not immediately removed, threatened the most fatal consequences. On the next morning after his ride he was seized with a complaint in the neck of the bladder, which having resisted all internal remedies, was relieved only by surgical assistance. But this relief was merely temporary—the cause of the disorder still remained—and the repetition of the operation became necessary. At first recourse was had to it only two or three times a day; but the pain and irritation continually increasing, the repetition became more frequent, till at last the surgeon was hardly gone from the bed-side before he was sent for again to give another moment's relief to his afflicted patient. These dreadful agonies were borne for a month nearly, with a resignation which never uttered a sigh nor a murmur; and to the last hour of his life this good man retained the same placid and benevolent temper of mind

which prevailed throughout the whole course of it; and when the last attempt was made to relieve him without effect, he gently reclined himself upon his bed—observing that all was now over; and though the irritation continued for some hours after, he never expressed a wish to have the attempt repeated. In this state he lay from six o'clock in the afternoon till midnight, the faculties of his mind still remaining entire, but his strength gradually sinking. Soon after midnight an evident alteration took place, which denoted the speedy termination of all his sufferings; and a few minutes before three o'clock in the morning, having looked upon his nephew who attended him with apparent complacency, he drew some short inspirations and quietly breathed his last.

Such was the concluding scene of Dr. Price's life. Distinguished from his earliest years for the meekness and equanimity of his temper, no injuries excited him to im-

proper resentment—no pain or affliction to impatience and discontent. Convinced of the great truths which he had so constantly taught, and so well exemplified in every period of his life, he calmly sunk under the last conflict of nature with a well-founded hope of rising again to a more glorious existence in a better state.

Having never had any children of his own, his great partiality for his relatives, united to the benevolent disposition of his mind, had long induced him to take under his particular care and protection his two nephews, who having had the happiness of being thus nearly related to him, received from him all the kindness and affection of the fondest parent.—To them he intrusted the distribution of his property after his decease, which he divided among his relatives with that strict regard to equity and justice which regulated all the actions of his life. The management of his funeral, in consequence, devolved upon them, who

had determined, in conformity with his wishes, that it should be as private as possible. But in this instance, I am sorry to say, they suffered their better judgement to be overpowered by the solicitations of his friends and admirers, who, insisting that it would be highly unbecoming that so good and great a man should sink into the grave without some public testimony of respect to his memory, so far prevailed upon them as to have the time of the funeral fixed for the *day* instead of the *night*, as they had at first intended.—By this means an opportunity of attending it was afforded to all who chose that method of testifying their respect for the deceased. So far as regarded the funeral itself, having been conducted by the direction and at the expense of the executors, it was as plain as if it had been performed in private; but the long procession of coaches certainly gave it a different appearance; and had not the designs of some of the visitors been

peremptorily resisted by the executors, of proceeding through some of the most public streets of London, in their way to Bunhill-fields, the whole would have degenerated into a pageant very unsuitable to the remains of the modest and humble person who was to be the subject of it. The funeral service having been performed by his amiable and intimate friend Dr. Kippis, in a manner truly solemn and impressive, all that was mortal of Dr. Price was deposited in the same grave with his wife and uncle, till the morning of the great day, which shall burst the chains of death and restore them to a new life of endless happiness and joy.

On the next Sunday after the funeral Dr. Priestley preached a sermon on the occasion to a numerous audience at the meeting-house in Hackney; nor was it possible that any one could have been found better qualified to pay this last tribute to his memory than the person who for more than

thirty years had enjoyed and deserved his highest esteem and affection. This sermon of Dr. Priestley was soon after published at the request of the congregation, and possibly read by some of them with the same feelings as it had been delivered; but since all connexion between them and Dr. Price's relatives was necessarily broken off at his decease, and a great part of them have long ago followed him to the grave, I know very little of that body, nor am I aware that any of their proceedings subsequent to his death have displayed such peculiar regard to his memory as to have the least claim to be recorded in the history of his life.

In reviewing the life of Dr. Price it is impossible not to admire the modesty, candour, and piety by which it was so eminently distinguished. Though he never formed an opinion which was not the result of long and patient investigation, he always maintained it with a diffidence of his own abilities, and a readiness to admit its proper

weight to every argument which could be urged against it. His great object was to ascertain the truth; and as he felt his own liability to error in the pursuit of it, he wished to make every allowance for the mistakes of others, and to respect the honest inquirer, however widely his opinion might differ from his own. Having no temporal interest to promote, nor worldly ambition to gratify, he quietly proceeded in the straight path of his duty, solicitous to procure the approbation of his own conscience rather than the applause of the world. Convinced that whatever debases must necessarily corrupt the human mind, he regarded all usurpation and tyranny as the worst enemies of truth and virtue; and considered every effort in support of civil and religious liberty as directed to the dearest and most important interests of mankind. To improve himself and others in the practice of virtue was the great and prevailing principle which governed all the actions of his

life. To this end his moral and political publications were equally directed; and although his success might not always correspond with his wishes, he never suffered himself to be discouraged in his endeavours, nor to relinquish the hope which he has often expressed, *that he had not lived in vain in the world.*—But of all the qualities which adorned the life of Dr. Price, none rendered him more the object of love and veneration than his unaffected piety and devotion. In all seasons and under all circumstances the great truths of religion were ever present to his mind; and the noble motives which they held forth as an encouragement to virtue had their full effect on his temper and conduct, in rendering a disposition naturally mild and benevolent still more amiable, and in raising a soul naturally serious and devout to a sublimer and more fervent adoration of the Deity. In private conversation his meekness and

simplicity * won and ameliorated the hearts of all who had the happiness of his friendship or acquaintance. In the services of religion, the humble and devout manner in

* Of the simplicity and meekness of Dr. Price, the following beautiful description is given by his friend Mrs. Chapone, in the character of *Simplicius*:

"While the vain man is painfully striving to outshine "all the company, and to attract their admiration by false "wit, forced compliments, and studied graces, he must "surely be mortified to observe, how constantly *Simplicius* "engages their attention, respect, and complacency, with- "out having once thought of himself as a person of any "consequence among them. *Simplicius* imparts his su- "perior knowledge, when called upon, as easily and natu- "rally as he would tell you what it is o'clock; and with "the same readiness and good will informs the most ig- "norant, or confers with the most learned. He is as will- "ing to receive information as to give it, and to join the "company, as far as he is able, in the most trifling conver- "sation into which they happen to fall, as in the most se- "rious and sublime. If he disputes, it is with as much "candour on the most important and interesting as on the "most insignificant subjects, and he is not less patient in "hearing than in answering his antagonist. If you talk "to him of himself or his works, he accepts praise or ac-

which he addressed the Deity, and the animated fervour with which he enforced the divine truths and precepts of the Gospel, never failed to impress his hearers with a

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" knowledges defects with equal meekness, and it is im-
" possible to suspect him of affectation in either. We are
" more obliged and gratified by the plain unexaggerated
" expressions of his regard, than by the compliments and
" attentions of the most accomplished pattern of high
" breeding; because his benevolence and sincerity are so
" strongly marked in every look, word, and action, that
" we are convinced his civilities are offered for our sakes,
" not for his own, and are the natural effects of real kind-
" ness, not the studied ornaments of behaviour. Every one is
" desirous to show him kindness in return, which we know
" will be accepted just as it is meant. All are ready to
" pay him that deference which he does not desire, and to
" give him credit for more than he assumes, or even for
" more than he possesses. With a person ungraceful, and
" with manners unpolished by the world, his behaviour is
" always proper, easy, and respectable; as free from con-
" straint and servility in the highest company, as from
" haughtiness and insolence in the lowest. His dignity
" arises from his humility; and the sweetness, gentleness,
" and frankness of his manners, from the real goodness
" and rectitude of his heart, which lies open to inspection
" in all the fearlessness of truth, without any need of dis-
" guise or ornament." Mrs. *Chapone's* Miscellanies, Essay I.

just sense of his own sincerity, and of the awful importance of those duties which he so earnestly enjoined upon them. In his discourses he seldom or ever deviated into the bewildering paths of theological controversy. The great end he always had in view was, to convey to his hearers right notions of the Deity as the foundation of all rational religion, and to instill into their minds the necessity of a virtuous course as the only means of securing his favour. Though steadfastly attached from his earliest years to the Christian religion, and to his own opinion of its nature and design, he indulged no evil passions or prejudice against those who entertained different opinions—or even who rejected it altogether.—His candour and liberality in this respect were indeed truly exemplary. Inspired by the mild spirit of Christianity, he condemned no man for his excess or for his want of faith; and happy had it been for mankind if all who professed the same

religion had been guided by the same spirit. Blest with a mind so mild and gentle, it was impossible that Dr. Price should not be alive to all the offices of humanity and compassion. Out of a moderate fortune which, with his sober and frugal habits, rendered him independent, he allotted a considerable portion to the duties of private charity. On all occasions his hand and heart were ever ready to relieve the distressed and indigent, and he only regretted that it was not in his power to be more extensively useful to his fellow-creatures. To his other virtues might be added the equanimity of his temper, which never suffered itself to be ruffled by passion or soured by resentment. But I shall dwell no longer on this subject, however agreeable it may be to my own feelings to expatiate upon it, or to commemorate those virtues which I have had the happiness for so many years to witness and admire.—Nor were the *talents* of Dr. Price less the objects of admi-

ration than the virtuous dispositions of his mind.—Whether he wrote on the more abstruse subjects of mathematics, political arithmetic, and metaphysics, or on the more popular and important ones of religion and morality, he equally manifested his abilities by the plain and perspicuous manner in which he delivered his arguments; and if he did not always succeed in converting the reader to his own opinions, he seldom or ever failed to secure his approbation of the candour and sincerity with which they were maintained.

Having already given an account of Dr. Price's writings in the order in which they were published, it will be unnecessary here to enter into the further discussion of them. On one or two subjects I might possibly venture, though not without considerable diffidence, to express some doubts; but on all the great points in politics and religion, in which I have ever agreed with him, it would indeed be a vain labour to attempt

the explanation or defence of opinions which he has enforced with so much truth and energy.

Here then I shall close these memoirs; and I am happy in the opportunity they give me of expressing the gratitude I owe to the memory of Dr. Price, and in declaring that no part of my past life affords me greater pleasure in the recollection of it, than those years in which I enjoyed his society and friendship—and that I look for no higher gratification in the remaining part of it than to be numbered among those who have not only enjoyed but have *deserved* his friendship.

THE END.

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